

**BLACK INSURGENCY: THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR LAND AND NATIONAL
INDEPENDENCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

The goal of Black Insurgency is to intervene in the classical period of Black Power Studies to produce scholarship that argues the perspectives of understudied organizations and activists who were not interested in reshaping American democracy, but rather sought to dismantle U.S. imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy, in-favor of Black self-determination. Land is the paradigm through which Black Insurgency examines a protracted struggle against domestic colonialism by Black radical organizations. Violence against the state was characterized as revolutionary action, necessary to topple the United States as a colonial regime that had been oppressing African-Americans. Organizations like, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and the Black Liberation Army (BLA), who embodied revolutionary Black nationalism, are either misunderstood or understudied within the field of Black Power Studies. Black Insurgency will intervene into the scholarship on Black Power to argue that not only was resistance as political violence an essential strategy for self-defense, but also a tactical response to the long-standing colonial war against Black America, while in pursuit of a Black nation-state. These revolutionary Black nationalist organizations and activists are ideologically similar in their approach to Black self-determination and demonstrate a central radical response within the Black Freedom Struggle that must be carefully engaged. The analysis of internal colonialism, Third World internationalism, armed struggle, land, and national independence are the politics of anti-imperialism by organizations that wish to dismantle U.S. imperialism internally, while simultaneously achieving national independence.

Chapter One - Introduction

Despite the efforts of the moderate Civil Rights Movement that made legislative progress in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board* decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, young activists embraced a deeper tradition of struggle for Black freedom. The legislative victories, though important, did not address the major concerns of land, autonomy, and self-determination, which were reflected in a new generation of radical praxis. The transition towards more radical activism was reflective of a different approach towards liberation, which paired with global anti-colonialist movements. As a result, various cities erupted with urban rebellion as a resistant response to police brutality, economic inequality, unemployment, dilapidated housing, inferior education, and the high rates of Black males dying or becoming drug addicted in the U.S. war in Vietnam, all issues that, some activists believed constituted Black America being a “domestic colony.” The perpetual racist colonial violence carried out by white supremacist groups and local policing against African-American people has historically been met with resistance by African-Americans who have organized and fought back for their self-determination.

Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, former U.S. political prisoner, Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army member, in a 2022 interview described his generation of activists as the “last of the loud.” Wahad ascribed the militancy that permeated Black youth in the 1960s to their social and cultural existence in post-war America which was emerging as an empire. Thus, the ideologies that developed were part of their ever-evolving ontological experience while living in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. Insurgency as a methodology by the Black youth in this

moment demonstrated their desire to deliver an armed consequence to white supremacy, racism, capitalism, and imperialism.¹

African-Americans involved in radical organizing in the 1960s did not brandish arms for the mere sake of looking militant, but rather they were acting within part of a radical memory of the generations before them. The voices and organizations that come out of this period advanced resistance movements that preceded them. As part of the Black Radical Tradition, the 1960s embodied a rebellious spirit that was fermented by the U.S. becoming a world power, armed struggle in the Third World, and a progressing Black radical intellectualism. These worldly implications created a militant response to the impending threat of fascism. The 1966 call for Black Power would best contextualize a revolting Black America that had its aims set on addressing white supremacy and establishing political power by any means necessary. Land, insurrection, community control, and creating alternative institutions were some of the ways in which Black activists asserted themselves into a worldwide Black revolution.²

For these activists, Black America existed as a microcosm of the broader racist colonialism conducted around the world by the United States and other western powers. As the United States had cultivated a certain worldly image that had deemed itself the citadel of democracy, while simultaneously oppressing African-Americans, organizations like the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and the Black

¹ Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, “The Last of the Loud – Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Philosopher of the Whirlwind,” Interviewed by Jared, *Millennials Are Killing Capitalism*, April 14, 2022, Audio 06:50. <https://www.patreon.com/posts/last-of-loud-bin-65132501>

² Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 34-55. See also, Kwame Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*, “The Spectre of Black Power,” (London: PANAFA Books, 1973), 36-43. “Fascism” was a commonly used term to describe the trajectory of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly by militant activists in the BPP, RAM, and BLA. George Jackson, former U.S. held political prisoner, and member of the Black Panther Party is known for best describing fascism as reaching its “most advanced form” in America in his prison writing *Blood In My Eye*. See, George Jackson, *Blood In My Eye*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1972), 127, 133-137.

Liberation Army (BLA) attempted to disrupt the status quo. Deconstructing domestic colonialism required radical Black activists to pursue national independence, which entailed carving out land in the United States through revolutionary action for self-determination. Consequently, revolutionary action as resistant violence to white supremacy was often met with white backlash or was characterized as “terrorism,” “unreasonable,” and “threatening.”³

Nonetheless, political violence as a means to nullify the domestic colonial relationship remained a legitimate issue for various organizations in the 1960s who sought to establish a true democracy and vanquishing the fraudulent system where African-Americans experienced second-class citizenship.⁴ Racism’s connection to the broader question of colonialism shaped a new perspective among activists throughout the period, uniquely placing African-Americans in the context of a protracted colonial war, and in some arguments, an ongoing genocide. These assertions were instrumental in waging a struggle through revolutionary action over rights to land, political power, and institutional control.⁵

³ Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962), 114. See also, Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, *Still Black, Still Strong*, “Towards Rethinking Self-Defense in a Racist Culture,” South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 1993), 62.

It must be recognized that the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) is not an organization, it is the nation in which the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) is working to liberate. NAIM is a variety of organizations that identify with the New Afrikan people’s struggle. The Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA) can be seen as an organizational body, it is in fact the preliminary governing body over the anticipated liberated lands. However, Black Insurgency refers to the RNA as an organization, or a political vehicle, in this moment of Black Power because it is easier to contextualize the functioning of activists involved in the struggle to “free the land.”

⁴ Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak*, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2014), 2-6. See also, Revolutionary Action Movement, “Twelve-Point Program,” RAM’s Twelve-point Program, 1964, *The Black Power Movement: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement 1962-1996*.

⁵ Lee Lew Lee, *All Power to the People: The Black Panther Party and Beyond*, Lee Lew Lee, dir. (1996, United States, Electronic News Group), Documentary. Dequi Kioni-Sadiki & Matt Meyer, ed., *Look For Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st Century Revolutions*, (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2017), 92. Sekou Odinga recounts why he still believes freedom is based on land and independence. As Odinga captures the political resistance he engaged in as a BPP, BLA, and New Afrikan Freedom Fighter, he argues the legitimacy of the Black Liberation Army as a clandestine response to oppression shaped by he and his peers political consciousness.

Black Insurgency: The Long Struggle for Land and National Independence will expand conversations on Black Power through an examination of three twentieth-century revolutionary Black nationalist organizations. The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and the Black Liberation Army (BLA) discuss revolution through the pursuit of land as self-determination and armed struggle as a method of insurgency for which land can come to fruition. Black self-determination and the pursuit of land are consistent themes amongst these groups, but not new objectives for African-American activists. In exploring the evolving nature of resistance amongst these revolutionary Black nationalist formations, it is imperative to contextualize ideological shifts, particularly in sequence with worldwide anti-colonial movements of the 1960s. National independence became a strategic goal in the Black Freedom Struggle for African-Americans to exercise sovereignty over land for the purpose of building a nation as a solution to the domestic colonial relationship. *Black Insurgency* focuses on the pursuit of sovereignty through revolutionary action by three ideologically similar formations.

Black Insurgency argues that through insurgency, Black activists, as a part of organizations within a broader movement, were engaged in an anti-colonial struggle in the pursuit of a Black nation-state. Part of their analysis argued that they were domestic colonial subjects and that the United States was an entity predicated on the continued oppression of African-Americans. *Black Insurgency* focuses on three organizations that sought national independence by pursuing a Black nation-state through armed insurgency. Through the examination of their political philosophy, the growth of their organizational ideology, movement leadership, anti-imperialism, and state repression, this thesis will expand conversations around Black Power to better incorporate how some radical activists argued that land and politically violent rebellion were legitimate measures for attaining national liberation.

Black Insurgency is important to the political history of Black resistance because it encourages readers to rethink Black Power as an ever-evolving politic that was limitless in the political imagination of African-American activists. At the heart of Black Power was revolutionary Black nationalism which was a belief tethered to self-determination to all nations, including the African-American community in the United States. Even though the Black Panther Party is not the focus of this work, they are essential to conversations involving RAM, the RNA, and the BLA. It is important for readers to take away that the organizations of focus are part of a genealogy of Black radicalism, much like the Black Panther Party. These organizations, like their predecessors, continued the Black Radical Tradition through its most critical component, insurgency.

Activists from the 1960s gathered in New York in October of 2021, 70 years following the petition to the United Nations to charge the United States with genocide for its treatment against the “American Negro,” an International Tribunal was held in New York City to revisit the argument of the U.S. Human Rights Abuses Against Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples.⁶ This gathering embodied the radical spirits of William L. Patterson, W.E.B DuBois, and Paul Robeson, who charged the United States with genocide in 1951.⁷ This tribunal was also connected to the work of Malcolm X, particularly in 1964, when he internationalized the Black Freedom Struggle by taking advantage of the United Nation’s Declaration on Human Rights to

⁶ Spirit of Mandela, “International Tribunal 2021 On U.S. Human Rights Abuses Against Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples,” *Facebook*, October 22, 2021. This tribunal was also intentionally held at the Audubon Ballroom where in 1965 Malcolm X was assassinated.

<https://www.facebook.com/SpiritOfMandela/videos/462372641806659/>

⁷ William L. Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against Negro People*, (New York: International Publishers Co., 1970, Originally Published, 1951), xxv-28.

bring charges of injustice against Afro-Americans by the United States to the international courts.⁸

The activists from various radical organizations of the Black Power era spoke about their contributions to combat white supremacy, genocide, and their overall fight for Black self-determination. Activists of the Black Panther Party, Black Liberation Army, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and the Republic of New Afrika, were present among others. The language used by these activists in their accounts of their 1960s political activities stressed that they were engaged in a “war,” a war for national independence.⁹ They emphasized an unwavering commitment to land and armed resistance. Their political contributions have inspired my inquiry into various organizations and the ideological positions on land and armed resistance as the route towards Black self-determination (i.e. national independence).

Black Insurgency utilizes Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams as the entry point for understanding these various organizations and their move from armed self-defense to enacting revolutionary warfare for the purpose of Black self-determination. Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams are both essential figures to the politics of Black Power. Ideologically, X and Williams serve as voices of resistance to white supremacy while being connected to the use of arms and understanding land as the basis for a national independence movement. Malcolm X, particularly, served as the charismatic international spokesman of the Black Freedom Struggle until his untimely assassination in February of 1965. Young activists revered Malcolm for his willingness

⁸ Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary*, “OAAU Founding Rally,” (New York and London: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 90.

⁹ Spirit of Mandela, “International Tribunal 2021 On U.S. Human Rights Abuses Against Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples,” *Facebook*, October 22, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/SpiritOfMandela/videos/462372641806659/> Sekou Odinga, Jihad Abdul-Mumit, Jalil Muntaqim, Pam Africa, Bilal Sunni Ali, Amina Baraka, Pete & Charlotte O’Neal, & Mumia Abu-Jamal (audio).

to address white supremacy head on with words while simultaneously being committed to revolutionary action.¹⁰

Robert F. Williams, similarly, remained an important figure to the Black freedom struggle because of his ideological transformation which occurred during his political exile in Cuba. Overtime, Williams's increasing radicalism, which saw him go from president of an National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter to president and international spokesman of two revolutionary Black nationalist organizations, which enabled ideological shifts in the Black Freedom Struggle due to his militant prestige and revolutionary philosophy.¹¹ While in exile, Robert F. Williams was appointed president of two influential revolutionary Black nationalist organizations due to his militant prestige and revolutionary philosophy.¹² X, alongside Williams, legitimized armed resistance, connecting it to revolutionary Black nationalism on a national stage, which had a massive appeal over young activists.

As radicalism increased amongst activists in the 1960s, internal colonialism became a comprehensive analysis for understanding the current state of Black life in America.¹³ Internal colonialism was an analysis of racism (i.e. white supremacy) and imperialism turned inward, predicated on the exploitation and underdevelopment¹⁴ of Black America under the economic

¹⁰ Maxwell Stanford (Muhammad Ahmed), *We Will Return to the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*. (Chicago, Illinois: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 26-31.

¹¹ Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* Vol 85, no.2 (September 1998), 567.

¹² Timothy Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 85, No. 2 (September 1998), 567-568.

¹³ Harold Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," *Rebellion or Revolution?*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 77-95. See also, Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 5-16.

¹⁴ See, Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London and New York: Verso Books, 2018; originally published, 1972), 15-34. See also, Walter Rodney, *The Groundings With My Brothers*, (London and New York: Verso Books, 2019; originally published, 1969), 9-18.

system of capitalism. This analysis derived from Marxist-Leninism, which provided a class analysis for the Black Freedom Struggle. Ultimately, Marxist-Leninism, and eventually Maoism, provided necessary scientific interpretation of the economic order of the world, this was essential to the development of revolutionary Black nationalism in this moment.¹⁵ In the United States, most notably the Black Panther Party embraced Marxist-Leninism. However, RAM, while comprised of various political theoreticians, were instrumental in assisting other organizations to reach these conclusions through intellectual cadres. The engagement with Maoism would have Black radical activists rallying the masses of African-American people to wage a “people’s war.”¹⁶ This evolving radicalism is imperative to the conversation on Black Power because it conceptualizes how these African-American activists would see themselves as revolutionaries in a vanguard role of a worldwide revolution against colonialism.

The arrival at an anti-imperialist politic enjoined the analysis of domestic colonialism for many revolutionary Black nationalist organizations. For some activists, the colonial wars the United States perpetuated abroad were inextricably linked to the domestic efforts to neutralize Black liberation through counterinsurgency.¹⁷ Essentially, what the military did internationally, the police did locally.¹⁸ Third World solidarity became a strategic and unifying effort amongst colonized people towards a decolonized future. For the revolutionary Black nationalist organizations, Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams were key figures who posed challenges to

¹⁵ Earl Ofari, “Marxism-Leninism: The Key to Black Liberation,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 4 No. 1, (1972), 36-37, 39-41. See also, Muhammad Ahmad, “Basic Tenets of Revolutionary Black Nationalism,” *Institute of Black Political Studies*, (December 1977), 1-2, 7-9.

¹⁶ Robin D. G. Kelley & Betsy Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture*, 1:4, (1999), 6-41.

¹⁷ Baxter Smith, “New Evidence of FBI “Disruption” Program,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 6, No. 10, Black Psychology (July-August 1975), 43-48.

¹⁸ Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Random House, 1967), 6-24.

white supremacy, colonialism, and imperialism, by struggling for self-determination and never denying the right to armed self-defense. The organizations of focus revered these leaders and would grow increasingly more radical in the pursuit of a Black nation-state.

Significance of Work & Questions

Black Insurgency intervenes in Black Power scholarship by focusing on perspectives of understudied organizations and activists who were not interested in reshaping American democracy, but rather dismantling U.S. imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy, through the creation of a Black Nation-State. Organizations like, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and the Black Liberation Army (BLA), embodied revolutionary Black nationalism and as a consequence remain ideologically misunderstood. These formations, through revolutionary action, were determined to establish nationhood for Black America, and armed struggle was never a question of legitimacy or illegitimacy because of their connection to the radical tradition of resistance.

Black Insurgency joins an ongoing conversation in the field of Black Power Studies. This work will explore the connection of armed insurgency to land, for the purpose of illustrating Black resistance and a concrete political objective tied to organizations beyond the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party. RAM, the RNA, and the BLA served particular purposes as political vehicles in moments of urban rebellion, Third World solidarity, movements for national independence, and heightened political repression. The pursuit of a Black nation-state, (i.e. land), and armed insurgency are contextualized through the ideologies of these organizations filled with activists that saw themselves engaged in anti-colonial revolutionary warfare. The questions that frame this research are, with the focus on land, how were these organizations a part of the Black Radical Tradition? How was insurgency a response to their criticism of

American democracy? And, why is the attainment of land through armed struggle (or, urban rebellion) used as a strategy to materialize Black self-determination?

Historiography

Black Power scholarship has a classical period, between 1966-1975, though evolving, this period remains rather ideologically misunderstood and attempts to straddle two fences of 1) reshaping postwar American democracy, and 2) a militant expression of racial pride, separatist politics, and anti-imperialism. The narratives that portray the second aspect of this era as “turning away from the slow and patient organizing tradition”¹⁹ will be challenged as an incomplete understanding of the ever-evolving Black radicalism of this period. Armed self-defense is commonly discussed within the fold of Black Power scholarship,²⁰ but I will expand this conversation to include a second phase to armed self-defense that was offensive in nature. Insurgency on the part of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and the Black Liberation Army (BLA) was an organized violent assault on the U.S. colonial apparatus. The organizations discussed RAM, the RNA, and the BLA, who embodied the philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism, are rarely contextualized as insurgents within the field of Black Power, particularly insurgents with a revolutionary purpose of achieving Black self-determination through armed struggle.

Peniel Josphe’s comprehensive examination of the Black Power Movement as a field of study creates a landscape of inquiry into various scholarly points surrounding the social, cultural,

¹⁹ Clayborne Carson, “Rethinking African-American Political Thought in the Post-revolutionary Era,” in *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Tony Badger and Brian War (London, 1996), 115-127.

²⁰ Jasmin A. Young, “Gloria Richardson, Armed Self-Defense, and Black Liberation in Cambridge, Maryland,” *The Journal of African America History*, Vol 107, No. 2, (Spring, 2022). Akinyele Umoja, *The Ballot and the Bullet: A Comparative Analysis of Armed Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement*, *The Journal of Black Studies*, Vol 29, No. 4, (March, 1999).

and political history of the moment.²¹ *Black Insurgency* will expand upon these scholarly interpretations of militancy, armed struggle, and revolutionary Black nationalism. Thus, reconceptualizing the way in which Black Power is understood as a movement, which is inextricably tied to the pursuit of a Black nationhood and aspects of armed struggle.

Various scholars define revolutionary Black nationalist organizations through their focus on and strategies of self-determination. Robin D. G. Kelley is one of the few scholars who makes mention of all three of my focus organizations in *Freedom Dreams*, which situates the Black radical imagination as a hub for revolutionary dreaming. According to Kelley, “revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement.” Kelley re-opens old conversations about past movements, in an effort to “tap the well of our own collective imagination,” and dream like earlier generations. *Black Insurgency* expands some of these conversations and cooperates with others to answer my research questions. For example, formations like the Republic of New Afrika and their connection to land through reparations is part of Kelley’s fourth chapter. *Black Insurgency* understands the importance of reparations, while simultaneously desiring to push readers into more radical conversations about why land is important to a nationalist movement.

²² And in “Black Like Mao,” with the help of Betsy Esch, Kelley explores the ideological visions of Black nationalist groups who were being influenced by the writings of Mao Tse-Tung. Here, militants from the Revolutionary Action Movement, evolve intellectually due to their relationship to Third World liberation movements, Robert F. Williams, and Malcolm X, which is particularly useful to *Black Insurgency*.

²¹ Peniel E. Joseph, “The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 96, No. 3 (December 2009), 753-756, 761, & 773-774.

²² Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2022), 6-9; “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture*, 1:4, (1999), 6-41.

The Black Power Movement's classical period is shaped partly by Robert F. Williams, who is part of the old revolutionary guard who inspired new activists by his approach to freedom and changed the perspective of Black Power politics forever. Timothy Tyson argues that Robert F. Williams's southern background and participation in U.S. "wars for democracy" are defining characteristics of his growing radicalism. While other scholars such as Walter Rucker positions Williams as the emerging figure who contributed to the decline of anti-Black racial violence in the U.S. Bill Mullen refers to Williams as the "transnational correspondent," arguing that Williams was a beloved spokesman of the Black Power movement from exile, an internationalist of the Bandung Era.²³ Thus, Robert F. Williams' definitive effect on the Black Power Movement is strictly measured by his leadership over younger activists with revolutionary Black nationalist politics, anti-imperialism, and evolving from armed self-defense to out-right revolution in America.²⁴ Robert F. Williams served as the catalyst for understanding armed self-defense in the period of non-violent direct action.

Similar to Robert F. Williams, Malcolm X has had a significant impact in the field of Black Power. Malcolm X is often revered for his clear, yet concise rhetoric that condemned white supremacy and threatened the American status quo. Fredrick Harper and L. M. Killian argue that Malcolm X's influence on Black militancy possessed the necessary charisma and organizational skill to lead a successful Black revolution.²⁵ Malcolm X is argued to have been

²³ Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*, "Transnational Correspondence: Robert F. Williams, Detroit, and the Bandung Era," (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2004), 76-79. The Bandung Era was an era in which non-aligned, or otherwise anti-imperialists nations in the Global South united against western colonialism.

²⁴ Timothy Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 85, No. 2 (September 1998), 551-555; Walter Rucker, "Crusader in Exile: Robert F. Williams and the International Struggle for Black Freedom in America," *The Black Scholar* Vol. 36, No. 2-3 (Summer 2006), 31; Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie and the Roots of Black Power*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999) 3-6.

²⁵ Fredrick D. Harper, "The Influence of Malcolm X on Black Militancy," *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (June 1971), 391-392.

the “prophetic” voice of the Black masses because of his ability to convey what the audience is thinking.²⁶ Throughout Black Power scholarship, especially when discussing resistance and radicalism, Malcolm X is often referred to as an entry point into Black radicalism.

As Black Power evolved through the contributions of both Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, their political advances were not new, they were simply more radical for their moment in time. Third World solidarity as part of an interrelated struggle against colonialism and imperialism was important in the 1960s, but also centuries prior. For example, Black internationalism is not a new phenomenon that emerges in the 1960s, but rather a part of the Black Radical Tradition. Leslie M. Alexander argued that the Haitian Revolution was the birth of Black internationalist politics, which connected the pursuit of a sovereign Black nation to the freedom struggles occurring in the United States. Also, Black internationalism was an interrelated aspect of the growing Black political consciousness of the nineteenth century.²⁷ This argument is important to the political history of resistance, or otherwise understood as political violence, that is part of a radical conversation of Black Power. As organizations in the 1960s that were internationalist in scope, they utilized political violence through insurgency for the pursuit of Black sovereignty in the twentieth century.

Black Power scholarship also addresses how Black people's vision for liberation challenged historic systems of oppression and white supremacy. The evolution of Black radical thought from foundational movement leaders led to the pursuit of a Black nation-state to exercise Black political power and self-determination. As part of this historic vision, scholars like, Tyson,

²⁶ Robert E. Terrill, “Protest, Prophecy, and Prudence in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* Vol. 4, No. 1, (Spring 2001), 27-29.

²⁷ Leslie M. Alexander, *Fear of a Black Republic: Haiti and the Birth of Black Internationalism in the United States*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2023), 6-11.

Mullen, and Rucker force readers to engage the leadership of Robert F. Williams in the Republic of New Afrika to explore this liberatory thinking and action. However, Edward Onaci's makes a riveting intervention in the history of Black Power Studies with *Free The Land*. Onaci explores the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) and Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika's (PG-RNA) tactics and ideology as an essential component to revolutionary Black political struggle. Onaci shows through the RNA an evolving aim of revolutionary Black nationalism in the mid-twentieth century. In the same year Onaci publishes *Free The Land*, Sam Klug publishes an article in the *Journal of History of International Law* to demonstrate the RNA's pursuit of a sovereign Black nation-state, through an examination of the organizational writings with the group's claim to territory, reparations, and international subjectivity. Broader perspectives of the Republic of New Afrika are growing, and the scholarship is increasing around this organization's visions of revolutionary Black nationalism as part of a legacy of Black Power and resistance.²⁸

Cedric Robinson most notably labels the traditions in which Black people globally resist white domination, in-favor of self-determination, as the "Black Radical Tradition."²⁹ Robinson's *Black Marxism* convincingly argued that there is an "indigenous" tradition in which Black people have resisted. Similarly, Akinyele Umoja and Walter Rucker argue an indigeneity in armed resistance, but particularly in the U.S. South.³⁰ Each argued that violence as resistance was understood as a part of an attack on a system of oppressive structures.

²⁸ Edward Onaci, *Free the Land the Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black-Nation State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 4-5 & 47-48.

²⁹ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism the Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 167-171.

³⁰ Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013), 2-7. Akinyele Umoja, "Eye for Eye: The Role of Armed Resistance" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1996), 16-18. See also, Walter Rucker, *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 6-10.

Black Insurgency works alongside the scholarship of Robinson by engaging the long, or protracted, struggle of Black people, but particularly in the U.S. In the examination of Black Power politics, the conclusion reached by activists about armed struggle and violence cannot be presumably passed over, as it was an essential feature to revolutionary Black nationalism, but also part of a genealogy of Black resistance. The Black Radical Tradition informs my work by inferring that whether resistance was performed consciously and subconsciously, it was used to reclaim humanity. That is to say insurgency by African-Americans over time was deployed, not to reshape American democracy, but rather deployed to reclaim their humanity and protect their material outcomes.

Historically, racism has been met with strategic responses from African-Americans, and scholars have captured the historical actions, whether they be violent or non-violent. However, the strategic action employed was usually predicated on the type of violence Black people were on the receiving end of. The deployment of violence by Black revolutionaries against white supremacy has been attributed to the capitalist racism the American society domestically subjects African-Americans to.³¹ Thus, Black activists between 1961 and 1981 resisted this inward facing imperialist aggression that rendered their community dispossessed, impoverished, lynched, and otherwise socially alienated. Many scholars characterize America to be an irredeemable hub of alienated racialized groups.³²

³¹ Charisse Burden-Stelly, *Black Scare/Red Scare: Theorizing Capitalist Racism in the United States*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2023), 4-7, 19-21, 43-45; Charles E. Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 1-7; Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1969), 5-15. Walter Rucker, "A Negro Within the Nation: W.E.B DuBois and the Creation of a Revolutionary Pan-Africanist Tradition, 1903-1947," *The Black Scholar* 32:3-4 (2002), 44-45.

³² Charle Pinderhughes, "How Black Awakening in Capitalist America Laid the Foundation for a New Internal Colonialism Theory," *The Black Scholar* 40:2, (2010), 74. See also, Robert Staples, "Race and Colonialism: The Domestic Case in Theory and Practice," *The Black Scholar* 7:9 (1976), 37-40. Manning Marable, *How Capitalism*

Through the intensified political upheaval of the mid-1960s an organization like the Black Panther Party (BPP) arose as a “legitimate representatives of the Black community.”³³ And as an aboveground movement, the BPP organized as an armed propaganda unit that materially provided the local community with health services, free breakfast programs, and political education. As one of the more visible organizations with the politics of Black Power, the BPP faced some of the stiffest state repression, including imprisonment, police shootouts, trumped up charges, political exile, and assassinations. The intensified political repression by the state was an undeclared war on Black radicalism. Most notably, Akinyele Umoja clarifies in both “Repression Breeds Resistance” and *We Will Shoot Back* that resistance was necessary, or it would have been impossible for organizers to protect their outcomes. As one of the leading scholars on the Black Liberation Army (BLA), Umoja positions the BLA as a paramilitary organization that protected the aboveground BPP and various other liberation movements from the ensuing repression.³⁴

The Black liberation movement by the mid-twentieth century possessed a level of ideological radicalism that was coupled with resistant actions. The Black Panther Party committed themselves to armed resistance, which accelerated the development of a clandestine armed movement called the Black Liberation Army (BLA). Insurgency was an important leveling of power wielded at the state by the BLA to illustrate resistance against political repression. Developing a more radical approach in a historical moment when the relatively new

Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 21-26, 93-101.

³³ Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2013), 9-12, 66-68.

³⁴ Akinyele Umoja, “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” *New Political Science* 21:2 (December 2007): 131-155. And, Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013), 2-7.

strategy of non-violent direct action was being accepted, armed resistance was defined as terrorism, like William Rosenau's categorization of the BLA as a homegrown terrorist organization with the aim of political violence. Such characterization fed into the psyche of the white American public, which viewed resistance as terrorism.³⁵

Some scholars framing of insurgency has been commonly characterized as “terrorism,” specifically when African-descended people deploy it, because of the context in which racist epistemologies conceptualize resistance. Thus, propelling the state to administer counterinsurgency tactics, which rebel slaves and modern Black revolutionaries bore the brunt. Scholarship on insurgency, much of it based on the enslavement period, has helped me frame these mid twentieth-century activists, allowing for connections to be drawn between periods of Black resistance. Kathryn Benjamin Golden's article “Armed in the Great Swamp: Fear, Maroon Insurrection, and the Insurgent Ecology of the Great Dismal Swamp,” reckons with the realities of armed resistance carried out by maroons in the Great Dismal Swamp between 1700-1865.³⁶

This specific characterization of resistance, or political violence, as insurgency is important to the framework of this thesis. Orisanmi Burton's *Tip of the Spear*, as a secondary argument, attempts to address insurgency on the part of Black revolutionaries in the United States prison system who are engaged in a *counter-war*.³⁷ Burton's use of the prison as a

³⁵ William Rosenau, “Our Backs Against the Wall: The Black Liberation Army and Domestic Terrorism in 1970s America,” *Studies of Conflict & Terrorism* 36:2, (2013), 181-185. See also, Anna A. Meier, “Terror as Justice, Justice as Terror: Counterterrorism and Anti-Black Racism in the United States,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 15:1, (2022), 90-95.

³⁶ Kathryn Benjamin Golden, “Armed in the Great Swamp: Fear, Maroon Insurrection, and the Insurgent Ecology of the Great Dismal Swamp,” *The Journal of African American History* 106:1 (Winter 2021): 3-7; Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, (New York: International Publisher, 1943), 293-315; Akinyele Umoja, “Maroon: Akinyele Umoja, “Kuwasi Balagoon and the Evolution of Revolutionary New Afrikan Anarchism,” *Science & Society* Vol. 79 No. 2 (April, 2015), 208-213.

³⁷ Orisanmi Burton, *Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression, and the Long Attica Revolt*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023) 4.

microcosm of the broader colonial war being waged against Black revolutionaries is essential to this thesis' conceptualization of domestic colonialism and counter-insurgency. *Tip of the Spear* argues that Black revolutionaries' participation in prison rebellion is because the carceral system at its core was predicated on political repression. This interpretation is useful to the broader understanding of "war" as the carceral system was waging an undeclared war of repression on Black revolutionaries that were incarcerated. This use of the term "war" is important to *Black Insurgency* because the colonial war transpiring against the African-American community is undeclared, but Black revolutionaries are organizing to resist it.

Black Insurgency acknowledges that political violence provided agency for Black revolutionaries in their pursuit of self-determination. The work of this thesis overlaps with part of Burton's argument, as Black revolutionaries pursue self-determination, the state employed domestic warfare to encapsulate the militancy of a movement towards national liberation. This act of "war" was met with resistance in the prison system, but also in the street through armed retaliation as part of the *counter-war*, what was later described as the "people's war."

Methodology

Black Insurgency explores a variety of sources that assist in answering my research questions surrounding land and armed insurgency through these three revolutionary Black nationalist organizations. Their ideological positions, the challenges they faced, and their political outcomes of major focus. The voices of the activists remain important to understanding their objectives, because it is the activists that saw themselves engaged in this protracted anti-colonial revolutionary warfare on behalf of Black America. To capture my argument, I will use mainstream media such as local news broadcastings, and newspapers will be used in conversation with the Black newspapers. The use of speeches and interviews from activists, government

documents, and the biographical/autobiographical works of activists. The use of academic theses and dissertations have contributed as well, because this is a growing area of focus on understudied organizations in the Black Power field. Also, the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) file is an essential collection of documents of the state surveillance of many of the organizations and activists from this period.

Both the Revolutionary Action Movement and the Black Liberation Army experienced state repression which forced them to operate as clandestine formations, which shapes the kind of sources that are used in the thesis. Also, in an effort to neutralize Black liberation, the FBI's counterintelligence operation would round up activists and place them in prison for their political activities and in some cases, those voices of protest are less available. The research is also shaped due to the fact that much of the leadership in all three organizations experienced some form of incarceration due to their revolutionary action in this period.

Black Insurgency has four chapters. Chapter One "The Roots of Black Power Resistance," will enhance the understanding of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams as foundational ideological figures to the three organizations, particularly because of their Third World solidarity which makes them increasingly critical of U.S. imperialism. The year 1964 is a year of significance to both these figures and to the broader Black Freedom Struggle. Chapter Two, "Rebellion as Revolution," will explore the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and how they are ideologically important to the other organizations because of the phases that lead to their revolutionary insurrectionist position in the late 1960s. Chapter Three, "Revolution is Based on Land!," will explore the radical tradition of land being seen as an essential feature of Black self-determination, while also looking at the inception of the Republic of New Afrika in 1968 as a political vehicle predicated on establishing a Black Nation-State for the Black colony in the

U.S. Lastly, Chapter Four, “An Insurgent Theory of Change,” will illustrate the strategy of armed insurgency as a method, supported by international law, to attain the Black Nation-State. This chapter will link the repression of the Black Panther Party to the manifestation of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) and then the BLA’s connection to the Republic of New Afrika.

Chapter Two - The Roots of Black Power Resistance

Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams exhibited approaches to the Black Freedom Struggle that were diametrically opposed to the more mainstream Civil Rights Movement's strategies in the early 1960s. Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams transformed the trajectory of resistance to white supremacy in a moment where non-violent direct action was conventional. These men were able to give voice to a growing militancy amongst African-Americans who were eager to explore new approaches to freedom. X and Williams also reaffirmed the importance of global solidarity, introducing internationalism into a confined political movement. As perspectives became more international, so did the conceptualization of the Black Freedom Struggle, X and Williams saw land and armed resistance as part of process of attaining freedom. These were the ever-evolving politics of both Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams that appealed to young activists in the 1960s.³⁸

The legacies of both Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X are manifested through the reshaping of political philosophies throughout the mid-twentieth century, organizations and activists of the 1960s modified their resistance strategies because of the ideological leadership of

³⁸ Maxwell Stanford (Muhammad Ahmed), *We Will Return to the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*. (Chicago, Illinois: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007) 13-20 & 23-33. See also, Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Liberation Without Apology: Reconceptualizing the Black Power Movement," *The Black Scholar* 31:3-4 (2001), 10-11.

these men. As an international figure, by 1965, Malcolm X became the measuring stick of militancy for the Black Freedom Struggle, political positions on armed resistance, revolutionary Black nationalism, Cuba, Vietnam, the Congo, Red China, Palestine, and appealing to the United Nations were all gauged from the vantage point of where Malcolm X stood ideologically.³⁹

In January of 1965, Malcolm X had visited the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Mississippi, where he emphasized that non-violence was only a useful tactic “if the enemy you are confronting is also non-violent.” Malcolm X was quoted saying, “you can’t talk peace to a person that doesn’t know what peace means [...] and you can’t talk non-violence to a person who doesn’t believe in non-violence, why you’re wasting your time.”⁴⁰ Malcolm X reinforced what many of the young activists had already understood about violence in the U.S. South. Scholar Akinyele Umoja would argue that armed self-defense had been a “major tool of survival” for many Black southerners to maintain integrity and existence in the face of whiter terror.⁴¹ Thus, Malcolm X was not lecturing to young activists, but rather raising practical questions about the legitimacy of non-violence in the Black Freedom Struggle.

³⁹ Michael R. Fishbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 13-29, 73-85. Alongside Malcolm X’s meeting with Fidel Castro in 1960, condemnation of the political assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, opposition to the U.S.’s role in Vietnam, and meeting with African Heads of State in 1964, Malcolm also visited the Arab world where he connected on the issue of Palestine and solidified solidarity with the Palestinian people. By 1967, SNCC activists who revered Malcolm upheld his position on Palestine which exacerbated the shift in the Civil Rights Movement. Malcolm X and his internationalism would be important to evolution of Black solidarity with Palestine. SNCC adopting this analysis would later help to push Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. toward anti-imperialism where he would outwardly condemn Vietnam and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in 1967.

⁴⁰ Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, “See for Yourself, Listen for Yourself, Think for Yourself: A Discussion With Young Civil Rights Fighters from Mississippi,” (New York: Pathfinder Press, January 1, 1965), 92.

⁴¹ Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 2.

Malcolm X's rhetoric prior to his 1965 meeting with SNCC left a blazing trail of radicalism, even on the African continent in 1964. And by the time SNCC activists made it to Africa in the Fall of that same year, Africans were reporting that if SNCC's position was to the right of Malcolm "no one'll listen to you."⁴²

Malcolm X as a model of personal transformation was significant to young activists' depiction of him. Being willing to arrive at new conclusion for the advancement of a collective movement was important to the trust young activists would instill into Malcolm X. The ability set himself apart from the Nation of Islam and regroup with new organizations was important to Malcolm X's growth as a leader, but also the growth of a movement that was behind him in ideology.⁴³

Malcolm X encouraged of young people to reconceptualize Civil Rights and broaden it to Human Rights, while also advocating internationalism. X's internationalism did not begin with his travels abroad in 1964 but can be gleaned from his Harlem meeting with Fidel Castro who arrived in New York City for the September 26th, 1960, UN General Assembly. Premier Fidel Castro, the explicitly communist leader of Cuba was brought to New York City for the UN General Assembly, but had a travel restriction imposed upon him, inhibiting him from moving beyond the island of Manhattan. Castro was welcomed into Harlem, New York, the "Black capital of the world," where he was warmly greeted by thousands of African-Americans who

⁴² George Breitman, ed. *Malcolm X Speaks*, (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 85.

⁴³ James Yaki Sayles, *Meditations on Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth: New Afrikan Revolutionary Writings*, (Spear & Shield Publications, 2010), 112.

revered the leader for his revolutionary victory in Cuba. The Cuban Revolution set a precedence for waging triumphant armed struggle over a U.S.-backed regime, while just 90 miles off the coast of its former colonial overlord. This success had an appeal to many African-Americans.⁴⁴ While in Harlem, one of the first men to greet Fidel Castro was Malcolm X, who at the time was lead minister for the Nation of Islam's Temple No. 7. Malcolm X was able to have words with Castro, they spoke of the "Negroes relationship to Cuba and the broader Third World," Patrice Lumumba, and the strength of political consciousness amongst "Negroes" in the United States.⁴⁵

Malcolm X's meeting with Fidel Castro was an open display of an emerging African-American solidarity with the Third World, this was the beginning of a relationship that would become essential for revolutionary Black nationalists, socialists, and anti-imperialists living in the United States. Malcolm X became an international spokesman of African-Americans and their ongoing resistance to white supremacy. The duty of Malcolm X, internationally, was to display the discontent of African-Americans and draw parallels to a global struggle against colonialism, imperialism, and white supremacy; while simultaneously fostering a growing level of militancy, especially in the U.S. North. This was significant with the backdrop of the Cold

⁴⁴ Johnetta B. Cole "Afro-American Solidarity with Cuba," *The Black Scholar*, Vol 8 No. 8/9/10, Report from Cuba (Summer, 1977), 75-77.

⁴⁵ Rosemari Mealy, *Fidel & Malcolm X Memories of a Meeting*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 2013), 11-13 & 43-44. After meeting Fidel Castro in 1960, Malcolm X continued to conduct his role in the Nation of Islam as minister of the moderate, yet militant Black nationalist religious group. As minister Malcolm X remained openly critical of the non-violent resistance strategies that the mainstream Civil Rights Movement was practicing, particularly in the U.S. South. Malcolm X was incredibly political in his rhetoric while in the Nation of Islam, which was largely religious, despite receiving memo to tone down his ruthless orations. This inclination to remove the political fervor from Malcolm X's teachings created internal strife while Malcolm remained part of the Nation of Islam. However, Malcolm X continued to deliver compelling speeches that had a substantial appeal of young activists particularly in the U.S. Northern cities.

War, particularly because as Malcolm's internationalism began to shift tides with the domestic freedom movement, it was also an enormous international blow to the image of the United States as a "democracy."⁴⁶ The militancy of the Third World and their national independence victories over former colonial powers was arguably tied to the ideological force of the Black Freedom Struggle in the U.S., which served as the "catalyst" for a global struggle against colonialism.⁴⁷ Robert F. Williams was another important leader who was also concerned about the connection between the domestic struggle against white supremacy and the positives of Black internationalism.

The influence of Robert F. Williams, who promoted organized armed resistance to remedy the ongoing issue of white supremacy, particularly in the U.S. South, led him to be chosen as the president of two revolutionary Black nationalist organizations by the late 1960s: the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA).⁴⁸

Williams, among many other things, is most notably known for his remarks to "meet violence with violence" from a 1959 press conference in Monroe, North Carolina following no indictment of a white man who pushed Mrs. Georgia White down a flight of stairs while working in a hotel.

⁴⁶ Malcolm X, *February 1965: The Final Speeches*, "There's a Worldwide Revolution Going On," (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992), 135-176.

⁴⁷ Robert L. Allen, "Black Liberation and World Revolution," *The Black Scholar* Vol 3, No. 6 (1972), 16. See also, Harold Cruse, "Negro Nationalism's New Wave," *New Leader* (1962); Reprinted in *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: Morrow, 1968), 73. This point can be seen as the reverse. Harold Cruse argued that new generation of activists in the U.S. were looking to the colonial world for its leaders, Cruse points to Fidel Castro in Cuba, Ahmed Sekou Toure and Kwame Nkrumah in Africa, and Mao Tse-Tung in China. Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X were mentioned as radical thought leaders for Black people in the U.S. too.

⁴⁸ Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 89-90. See also, Edward Onaci, *Free The Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2020), 20-32.

Williams' remarks were also a response to the acquittal of another white man who brutally beat and attempted to rape Mary Ruth Reed.⁴⁹ While trying to hold on to the belief that the 14th amendment would be enforced to protect all citizens, Williams grew discontent as white supremacists' actions against African-Americans throughout the U.S. South were never held accountable. It became abundantly clear that the African-American experience needed an alternative solution to the rampant effects of violent racism, i.e. colonialism. Robert F. Williams would evolve politically to promote new solutions for Black America, which were tied to his later shift that saw Black America as part of the Third World.

By 1962 Robert F. Williams had authored a book entitled *Negroes With Guns*, where Robert F. Williams, ex-President of the Monroe, North Carolina Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a traditional civil rights organization that promoted non-violent direct action, responded to growing anxiety about Black militancy by emphasizing the right to armed resistance in the face of racial terror. Williams's position that violence was a necessary form of self-defense clashed with the modern Civil Rights Movement's leaders, like Dr. King.⁵⁰ Yet, as Timothy Tyson has argued, armed self-defense was an "indigenous" component of southern Black life.⁵¹ Southern Black resistance often led to exile.

⁴⁹ Sandra Dickson & Churchill Roberts, *Negroes With Guns: Robert F. Williams and Black Power*, dir. by Sandra Dickson & Churchill Roberts (2004, United States). See also, Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962), 60-64.

⁵⁰ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 115.

⁵¹ Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, "Black Power," and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85, no.2 (September 1998): 567. See also, Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962), 194.

Similar to Ida B. Wells, who left the U.S. South after publishing an editorial about lynchings, Williams' militant confrontation with the Ku Klux Klan forced him to flee the U.S. South to Cuba, where he wrote about Black radicalism in *Negroes With Guns*. With the publication of *Negroes With Guns*, Williams forced U.S. citizens, in that moment, to deal with the fact that white supremacy created the militant response by African-Americans, in which violence by African-Americans was utilized to recapture their humanity. Resistance to the racist ethics, values, and culture of the dominant society through organized violence was seen as a necessary challenge to alleviate the suffering of Black America.

Robert F. Williams' activism evolved while in exile. But prior to his exile, Williams, former President of the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP, oversaw the famous "Kissing Case," in which a white woman called the police alleging that two Black boys (David Ezell "Fuzzy" Simpson and James Hanover Grissom Thompson) kissed the white woman's daughter on the cheek. With the backdrop of the Cold War, the "Kissing Case" became internationally significant, around the world the legitimacy of U.S. "democracy" came into question until the boys were released. A major part of Robert F. Williams' advocacy for armed "self-reliance" was to defend Black women. Following an acquittal of a white who attempted to rape Mary Ruth Reed, it was said that Monroe had declared "open season on Black women," from this point forward Williams organized an armed patrol unit to protect Black women in the community.⁵² Robert F. Williams' militancy drove him into confrontation with the Ku Klux Klan. As an

⁵² Sandra Dickson & Churchill Roberts, *Negroes With Guns: Robert F. Williams and Black Power*, dir. by Sandra Dickson & Churchill Roberts (2004, United States)

activist, Williams continued to support the demonstrations of the broader Civil Rights Movement, which included sit-ins.

In 1961, the Freedom Riders came to Monroe, North Carolina to demonstrate for better employment and increased wages for Black residents. The Freedom Riders were met with hostility from a local white mob, which was stirred up by the police chief. Violence broke out, Williams encourage the Freedom Riders to remain pacifists but not to proclaim their stance on non-violence publicly to avoid “full-scale violent attacks.” The armed mob continued to attack the Freedom Riders well into their stay, but Black community members began to resist the mob with guns. Events transpired that led the Stegalls, a racist white couple, into Williams’ home. Robert F. Williams would eventually be charged with kidnapping the Stegalls and would have to flee the Ku Klux Klan and the charges.⁵³ Williams became a “fugitive” because of these charges and would end up seeking political asylum in Cuba in 1961.

From Cuba, Robert F. Williams would politically evolve from armed self-reliance against white supremacy to full-fledged guerilla warfare against the structural and institutional violence perpetuated by the United States in Black communities. The fundamental understanding of racism and white supremacy being at the core of America’s culture was obvious to Williams, it is quite literally what forced him into exile. While in exile, Williams began link the racism practiced against Black America to the imperialist aggression performed by the United States abroad. In essence, what the United State did abroad to “colored people,” it practice domestically

⁵³ Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962), 75-104.

as a microcosm of the broader world. It was indeed Robert F. Williams's ideological growth that was important to the political history of Black resistance, because it contextualized the use of violence as a tactic for social transformation.⁵⁴

This position by Robert F. Williams resonated with the young activists, who particularly understood that there was no contradiction between armed resistance and a movement which had the ultimate aim of establishing peace. The co-existence of desiring peace and wielding guns would ultimately reshape the Black Freedom Struggle. And despite being at odds with the Civil Rights Movement's established leaders, like Roy Wilkins and Dr. King on non-violence, Robert F. Williams never dissuaded young activists from participating in non-violent direct actions throughout the U.S. South. However, Williams did say, "Non-violence workshops are springing up throughout Black communities. Not a single one has been established in racist white communities to curb the violence of the Ku Klux Klan."⁵⁵ Organizations like the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and later, the Republic of New Afrika would look to Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, both, as ideological figures who embraced the worldwide Black revolution, which saw armed resistance, revolutionary Black

⁵⁴ Robert F. Williams, *Let it Burn – The Coming Destruction of the U.S.A.?* interviewed by Robert Carl Cohen, dir. by Robert Carl Cohen (Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, 1968). See also, Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*, "Transnational Correspondence: Robert F. Williams, Detroit, and the Bandung Era, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 79-82. Mullen looks at how the Bandung Era shaped the radical politics of Black America, particularly with Robert F. Williams, Malcolm X, and activists from Detroit. The opposition to U.S. imperialism is shaped within the scholarship of Mullen.

⁵⁵ Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire, Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 64. See also, Charles E. Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 153-154.

nationalism, and Third World solidarity as the roadmap to establishing peace and self-determination.⁵⁶

The year 1964 was a significant year for the Black Freedom Struggle, the legislative victory of the Civil Rights Act would pass, Malcolm X would announce his independence from the Nation of Islam, establishing two new organizations, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) and Muslim Mosque Inc. And Robert F. Williams in February of 1964 would publish an article entitled ‘Revolution Without Violence?’ which argued:

This racist imperialist oppressor will not be brought to his knees, simply because of the fighting ability and military capability of Black Freedom Fighters and their allies inside the U.S., but because of the creation of economic, chaotic conditions, total disorganization, frustration of his essential and ultra vital organs of production, and adverse conditions created by the worldwide liberation struggle.⁵⁷

Robert F. Williams was connecting the international struggle against U.S. imperialism to the domestic fight by Black Freedom Fighters to ward off white supremacy in Black communities. This position by Williams would ignite an insurgent practicality amongst young activists, particularly the Revolutionary Action Movement, who would see armed insurgency as a tactic against the United States as part of the worldwide Black revolution, and a strategy for Black self-determination in the United States. That same year Malcolm X would deliver *The Black Revolution*, a speech from April of 1964. In which Malcolm X conveyed to the audience that the

⁵⁶ Robin D.G. Kelley & Betty Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture*, Vol 1 No. 4 (1999), 14-17. See also, Walter Rucker, “Crusader in Exile: Robert F. Williams and the International Struggle for Black Freedom in America,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 35, No. 2/3, Black International Issues, (2006), 24.

⁵⁷ Robert F. Williams, “Revolution Without Violence?” *The Crusader*, Vol 5, No. 2, (February 1964), 4.

people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were “seething with bitterness, animosity, hostility, unrest, and impatience with the racial intolerance that they themselves have experienced at the hands of the white West.” Thus, these discontent racialized groups in the United States and around the world were challenging the U.S.’s hypocritical displays of democracy and “moving towards an uncompromising militant policy of Black nationalism.” Malcolm X would continue by arguing that revolution based on “land” and “bloodshed.”⁵⁸ “It was stones yesterday, Molotov cocktails today, and it will be hand grenades tomorrow,” Malcolm said, and quickly referred back to the conditions of racial discrimination and violence happening to African-Americans that were bound to erupt into a “racial explosion.”⁵⁹

With the 1964 having the legislative backdrop of the Civil Rights Act being passed, why is it that Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X would continue to incite violent revolution as the response to white supremacy? In an effort to pair Black America with the rest of the colonized world, Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, provided provocative arguments that resonated with a sector of society that was less concerned with integration, and more concerned with self-determination. In connection to X and Williams, “insurgency” is the language I use to rethink how younger activists saw themselves as revolutionaries, particularly in the “vanguard” role of the worldwide Black revolution, which wished to establish new theories of change as part of the global anti-colonial struggle. By identifying with the Third World and invoking the right to national independence, land became an essential feature to revolutionary struggle in this

⁵⁸ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, “The Black Revolution,” (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 48.

⁵⁹ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, “The Black Revolution,” (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 47-51.

moment, and what the Third World was doing to be victorious had to be replicated domestically for Black America to achieve sovereignty.

Chapter Three - Rebellion As Revolution

Revolutionary Black nationalism reappeared into the American political landscape due to the failures of the integrationist movement. Prior to the 1962 essay by Harold Cruse “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” revolutionary Black nationalism was linked to leaders like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B DuBois, and Marcus Garvey, practically twenty-five year before of Cruse’s article. The Black nationalism of the early twentieth century was broad and less pronounced than what Cruse would later put forth, and what would materialize by the end of the 1970s. Washington, DuBois, and Garvey were part of a spectrum of nationalist thinking, from conservative Black capitalism, to Marxism, to Pan-Africanist emigration (Back to Africa), it is impossible to deny Black nationalism as part of the African-American tradition of resistance.⁶⁰ However, what made Harold Cruse’s articulation about revolutionary Black nationalism so important, is its declaration of Black America being a domestic colony.

Part of Charisse Burden-Stelly’s argument in *Black Scare, Red Scare*, is that anti-Black racial oppression cannot be fundamentally understood without understanding anti-radicalism. Thus, the activists who succeeded the earlier era of twentieth century Black nationalists, with the analysis of Black America being a domestic colony, were engaged in an evolving type of Black radicalism. Harold Cruse, for example, is articulating domestic colonialism while being situated

⁶⁰ Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1969), 89-105.

in the Communist Party U.S.A. Moreover, radicalism from this period onward evolves as a byproduct of the intensified violence deployed against African-Americans. Domestic colonialism overlaps well with Burden-Stelly's theory on the "Structural Location of Blackness," which codified the Negro Question in the relationship between Northern capital and the rural Southern economy that maintained a high concentration of production with a lowly status of African-Americans. This reality is a type of layered violence.⁶¹ Thus, the colonial relationship between African-Americans and the economic order was predicated on racial subjugation through capitalist exploitation. Domestic colonialism as an analysis for this reality forces a new generation of activists to confront this type of domination through insurgency.

The Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) as an organization had reinforced the long argument that Black America had been a domestic colony and the Black colony was economically, socially, and politically subordinated, and in a perpetual state of war through layers of violence. Consequently, Black America shared a similar underdevelopment with the rest of the Third World.⁶² This particular type of analysis that paired Black America with the Third World was a necessary feature in the philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism. Black America had to see itself as a "nation within a nation" in a protracted struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism.⁶³ RAM did not arrive at this conclusion during its initial inception, but with the

⁶¹ Charisse Burden-Stelly, *Black Scare, Red Scare: Theorizing Capitalist Racism in the United States*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 23-29.

⁶² Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution*, "Revolutionary Nationalism & the Afro-American," (William and Morrow Inc., 1968) See also, Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London and New York: Verso Books, 2018; originally published, 1972), 15-34. And, Hermon George Jr., "Black America, the 'Underclass' and the Subordination Process," *The Black Scholar*, Vol 19, No. 3 (1988), 48-51. The concept of Black America being in a perpetual state of "war" is best describe by Imari Obadele. Imari Abubakari Obadele, "War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine," *Malcolm X Society* (1968), 10-14.

⁶³ Max Stanford (later Muhammad Ahmad), "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American Student," in *Liberator*, January 15, 1965.

help of Cruse's essay, Malcolm X, and Robert F. Williams, the groundwork would be laid for one of the most "dangerous" organizations in America during the 1960s.⁶⁴

The ideological shift that most notably transpired in the 1960s was the call for "Black Power" that came from Stokely Carmichael, later Kwame Ture, and this was a significant shift to the Civil Rights Movement. Publicly, the Civil Rights Movement was a non-violent direct action front, the shift to "Black Power" altered stances between the moderate and militant factions, though "Black Power" was not explicitly evoking violence it maintained armed self-reliance as a key component, which was the major backlash of the slogan. But what does the Revolutionary Action Movement have to do with this moment? RAM, which participated in the early non-violent direct action campaigns also had an ideological shift that preceded the call for "Black Power" in 1966. Focusing on the Revolutionary Action Movement provides a new way of looking at a radical shift in the 1960s that advanced the organization's ideology toward insurgency as a method for social transformation, making RAM a foundational piece of the puzzle to explore how African-American activists wished to shape their destiny. In October of 1962, Max Stanford (later Muhammad Ahmad) wrote, "Orientation to a Black Mass Movement," which outlined the defining aims of a worldwide Black revolution. In arguing for the liberation of "Afro-Americans," Stanford would stress that revolution was a "complete change of society" and creating organized structures to reach the Black masses and create an international perspective would "destroy universal slave masters."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Muhammad Ahmad, "Muhammad Ahmad COINTELPRO 101 Extra Footage," Interview with Liz Derias for COINTELPRO 101 film, *Freedom Archives*, (2010).

⁶⁵ Max Stanford (Muhammad Ahmad), "Orientation to a Black Mass Movement," *Muhammad Ahmad Writings, 1962-1991*, (October 1962).

Much scholarship on the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) saw the organization as solely intellectual, serving as an ideological piece to the broader vanguard movement happening in the United States, or completely omit the armed insurgency position of the organization.⁶⁶ Though RAM did serve as an ideological foundation with Marxist-Leninism, Maoism, and revolutionary Black nationalism to organizations that would come after, particularly the New York Black Panther Party of New York (1966 led by Larry Neal)⁶⁷ and the more prominent Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (1966); RAM represented the beginning stages of an insurgent organization in the U.S. Muhammad Ahmad, as a former participant in RAM, and Josh Jones provide scholarship that best benefit the insurgent nature of RAM through theories of guerrilla warfare, which made RAM a threat to the status quo.

Malcolm McLaughlin, James Robenalt, and Robin D.G. Kelley position RAM as a militant ideological force in this period, while demonstrating RAM's role in bringing urban guerilla warfare to the United States. McLaughlin and Robenalt particularly draw in RAM between 1967-1968, which was RAM's insurrection phase. RAM as an underground clandestine organization in this moment is working in various cities as urban rebellions sprang up to tactically respond, ultimately attempting to make cities like Newark, New Jersey and Cleveland,

⁶⁶ Jefferey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), 78-81, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *Black Against Empire: The History of the Black Panther Party*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 31-35, 40, 43, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls: Critical Journal On Black Politics & Culture*, Vol 1, No. 4, (1999), 14-21, And, Thomas L. Blair, *Retreat to the Ghetto: The End of a Dream?* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 157.

⁶⁷ Henry English, Akua Njeri, Ron Wilkins interviews with Jefferey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2019). See also, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1990), 45. Though RAM members have claimed to have formed Black Panther Parties in Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Cleaveland, evidence does not reveal that these groups were sizable or particularly active.

Ohio battlegrounds for revolutionary warfare.⁶⁸ Kelley, on the other hand, captured the growth of RAM through Third World solidarity, which was part of this Black internationalism that was important to the United States Black Freedom Struggle for purposes of developing anti-colonial movements.⁶⁹

The year 1964, as discussed in the previous chapter, was a significant year in the Black Freedom Struggle, the work of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams was important to the ideological development of RAM, who would publish the *Black America* periodical. Muhammad Ahmad, of the RAM, would ascribe the political significance of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams to their efforts in Africa and Latin America. Their action created an international lens to see the racist U.S. government “truly pictured as the citadel of world imperialism.”⁷⁰ This is part of the intellectual evolution of Black radicalism that moved Robert F. Williams from “armed self-reliance” against white terror to guerrilla warfare, or armed struggle, for Black liberation. This evolution also reconfigured Malcolm X, who was eventually seen beyond just a charismatic spokesman for the Black Freedom Struggle, but rather a practical organizer with set objectives through his organizations, especially following his split with the Nation of Islam. RAM’s 1964 *Black America* periodical exhibited the ideological sophistication of the organization, as it was outright rejecting integration with an article from James Boggs, elaborating on the roots of revolutionary nationalism with writings from Garvey, Malcolm X, Harold Cruse, and Robert F.

⁶⁸ Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); James Robenalt, *Ballots and Bullets: Black Power Politics and Urban Guerilla Warfare in 1968 Cleveland*, (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books, 2018), 83-92.

⁶⁹ Robin D.G. Kelley & Betty Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture*, Vol 1 No. 4 (1999), 9-11, 14-19.

⁷⁰ Muhammad Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 33.

Williams; and lastly, it propagandized Black youth and demonstrated solidarity with the Vietnamese.⁷¹

In an effort to confront the abhorrent conditions of Black America, RAM's "domestic colonialism" analysis was the way of understanding the structural inequality,⁷² and rebellion was the method for disrupting the beneficiaries of the racist structural inequality. Black cities of the U.S. North became battlefields in the fight for land and self-determination. By May 4th 1964, RAM along with Grace and James Boggs drafted a twelve-point program that would be strategic in building African-American political power in the U.S. North.⁷³ The program included:

1. Development of a national Black student organization/movement.
2. Development of Ideology (Freedom) schools.
3. Development of rifle clubs.
4. Development of Liberation Army (Guerilla Youth Force)
5. Development of propaganda, training centers, and a national organization
6. Development of underground vanguard.
7. Development of Black workers "liberation unions."
8. Development of block organizations (cells).
9. Development of nation within a nation concept, government in exile.
10. Development of war fund (political economy).
11. Development of Black farmer co-op.
12. Development of Army of Black unemployed.

RAM ideologically serves as a vanguard organization based on the twelve-point program which sought to address the pressing matters of the Black "colony," especially in the U.S. North. Within the twelve-point platform exist future strategies for other revolutionary Black nationalist organizations that succeed RAM. For example, points three, four, six, and twelve all comprise of

⁷¹ RAM, Black Liberation Front of the U.S.A, *Black America*, (Fall 1964)

⁷² Harold Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro American," *Studies on the Left* Vol 2, No 3. (1962), 74-97. See also, Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 8-20.

⁷³ Revolutionary Action Movement, "Twelve-Point Program," RAM's Twelve-point Program, 1964, *The Black Power Movement: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement 1962-1996*. And, Muhammad Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 123.

what would eventually become the Black Liberation Army (1969), which was the politico-military organization with the primary objective to fight for the independence and self-determination of Black people. Also, point nine: the development of nation within a nation concept, or a government in exile, this is the gradual conceiving of the Republic of New Afrika (1968). In fact, Milton Henry (later Gaidi Obadele) was elected treasurer of RAM, he and his brother, Richard Henry (later Imari Obadele), would work to establish the Republic of New Afrika. Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X also served in elected roles, X being the International Spokesman and Williams serving as International Chairman.⁷⁴

As an organization, RAM was largely concerned with the self-determination of the Black “colony.” Urban cities in the U.S. North were considered targets for organizing mostly students and the Black unemployed (lumpenproletariat). The topic of land was a conversation addressed by RAM activists, however, the issue of political power was more pressing. James Boggs, in a 1972 essay argued that “the city is the Black man’s land,” though this came after the dissolution of RAM, the concept was occurring during the development of the twelve-point platform. Boggs argued that the city was the “hub” for political power,⁷⁵ but the city posed many challenges, yet advantages, as insurgents RAM saw the city to be in necessary proximity to the capitalists, who needed to be “disrupted” for their perpetual role in racist inequality and exploitation.

In the 1960s, RAM was the essential organization to theorize around ideas of Black insurgency, but particularly in urban cities. RAM had not particularly stressed the importance of land in their theories of change, but with their gradual approach to militancy and the leadership of both Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, they saw insurgency as a method of fulfilling

⁷⁴ Muhammad Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 123.

⁷⁵ James Boggs, “Black Cities: Agenda for the 70s,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 4, No. 3, (1972), 52-54.

multiple goals, one being control over the local political apparatus. In 1963, prior to the development of the twelve-point program, RAM became an underground organization, using other aboveground organizations as fronts, like Queen Mother Audley Moore's African American Party of National Liberation. RAM witnessed the assassination of John F. Kennedy, which Don Freeman had argued to be a move made by the "ultra-right." In that same year, uprisings across the city of Philadelphia ensued shortly after over episodes of police brutality. Tensions were rising in the urban cities and RAM saw riots as a potential act of spontaneous rebellion. Muhammad Ahmad, Don Freeman, and Wanda Marshall had theorized about the potentiality of spontaneous rebellion as an act of insurrection in the U.S. North. Following an intense encounter with the police during a coalition march to the police station, RAM activists and other people involved were met face-to-face with machine guns, it was this scenario that drove RAM underground and ceased all public visibility.⁷⁶

Muhammad Ahmad organized RAM into three phases, 1961-1963 was the non-violent direct-action phase against racial segregation in the U.S. South. Phase two, 1964-1966 was the "transitional" phase in which non-violent direct action and urban rebellion existed simultaneously as forms of protest. Urban rebellion in the U.S. North came from an analysis that the U.S. capitalist system needed to be considerably weakened. The final phase, phase three, 1967-1969 was the insurrectionary stage,⁷⁷ which saw over 200 major U.S. go up in flames as

⁷⁶ Muhammad Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 112-113.

⁷⁷ H. Rap Brown (Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin), *Die Nigger Die!*, (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books, 2002; originally published 1969), 37-39. H. Rap Brown argued in his that violence in the riots, or rebellions, that occurred in the late-1960s created a sense of peoplehood amongst the African-American community. Essentially class divisions eroded as the rebellions transpired, Black people began to see themselves as one against the state. Also, guns played a significant role in rebellion. H. Rap Brown used New Jersey 1967 as an example. "the cops and the National Guard came into the Black community and were raising hell until the brothers sent they had guns." To conclude this point from Brown, America made it clear that it only respected violence. This argument by H. Rap Brown, a known activist in this moment, underscored the nature of the rebellions that RAM saw as having revolutionary potential by adding methods of guerilla warfare.

violent rebellion ensued the urban centers. By 1969, domestic conflict in the United States was at an all-time high between the activists who saw themselves as revolutionaries engaged in a protracted war of anti-colonialism for self-determination, and the state which unleashed its police and National Guardsmen all across the nation.⁷⁸

The urban uprisings of the late 1960s, particularly in 1967-1969, were not mere acts of chaos, but rather organized spontaneous rebellions. And rebellion, or what the news media referred to as “riots,” were actions organized by activists and personalities that existed in the ranks of RAM, many of which have been purposely written out of history. RAM’s insurrectionary period was so sophisticated in its strategy of guerilla warfare that it was reported that by 1970 spontaneous urban rebellion was replaced with rooftop snipers to showcase the militaristic capabilities of the Black community against law enforcement.⁷⁹

In Muhammad Ahmad’s writings in 1970 on “Black Guerilla Warfare: Strategy and Tactics,” Ahmad and RAM were citing Robert F. Williams and expounding upon Williams’s earlier provided strategic plan from exile.⁸⁰ The 1964 article from *The Crusader* “U.S.A: The Potential for Minority Revolution, part one.” Williams explicitly states that urban guerrilla warfare in the U.S. is a “new concept of revolution.” Williams purposes insurgent methods because, “It sustains confusion and destruction of property. It dislocates the helpless, sprawling octopus.”⁸¹ This would be an explicitly an anti-imperialist position by Black revolutionaries who saw the United States as an “octopus” with tentacles that wreak havoc across the Third World,

⁷⁸ Muhammad Ahmad, “History of RAM: Revolutionary Action Movement,” in *Freedom Archives Monograph*, 1979, 1-2.

⁷⁹ Muhammad Ahmad, “History of RAM: Revolutionary Action Movement,” *Freedom Archives Monograph*, 1979, 2.

⁸⁰ Max Stanford (Muhammad Ahmad), “Black Guerilla Warfare: Strategy and Tactics,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 2, No. 3 (1970), 31-32.

⁸¹ Robert F. Williams, “Revolution Without Violence?,” *The Crusader* Vol.5, No.2 (February, 1964), 1-8.

the job of Black revolutionaries, in the vanguard role, would be to weaken the “octopus” from a strategic proximity of living inside the “belly of the beast.” Before RAM reached this point in the mid-late 1960s, as an organization they supported mass demonstrations around the country, even in the U.S. South, but remained strong advocates of armed self-defense, like their leadership in Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X who would push the organizations ideology further.

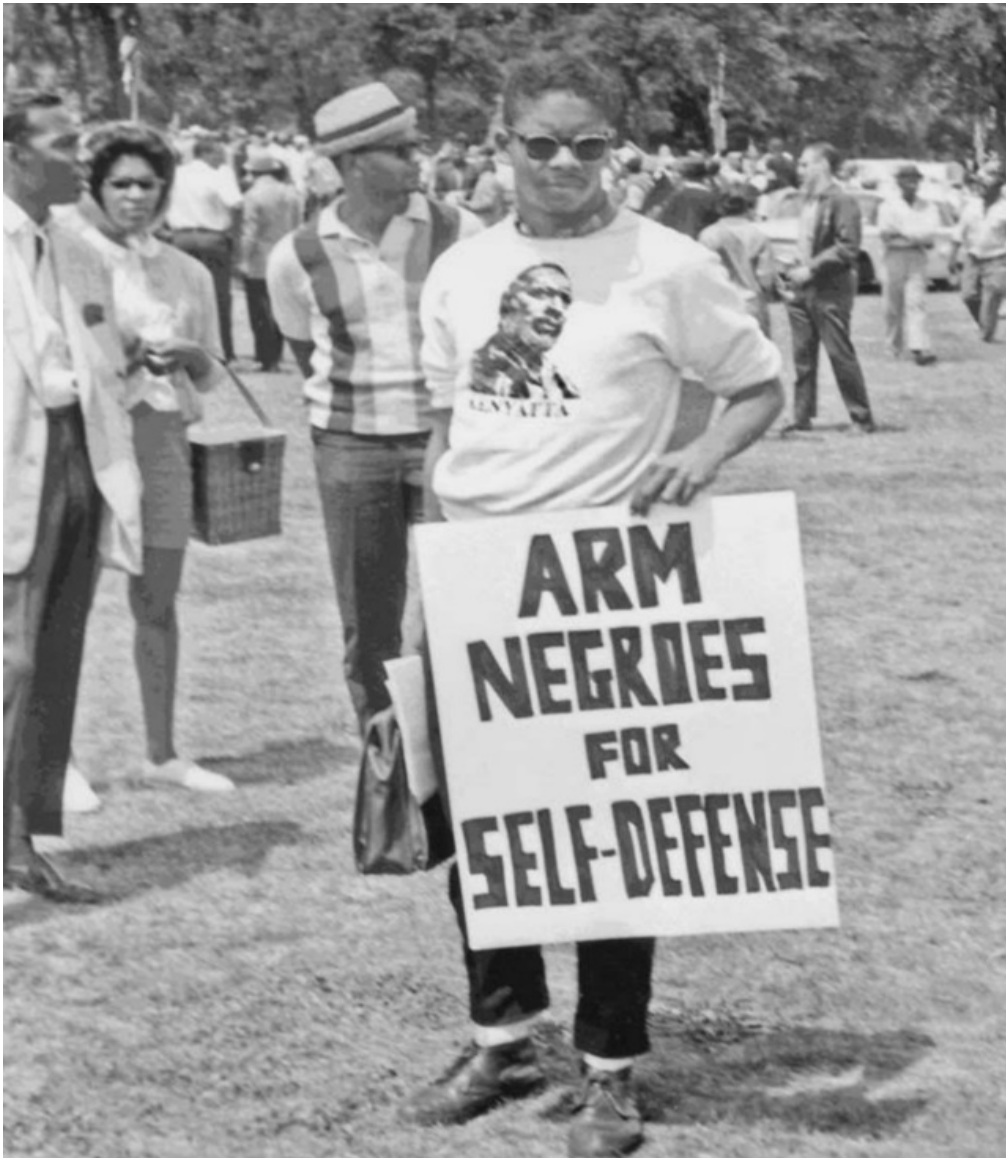


Figure 2.1 Revolutionary Action Movement chairman Max Stanford (later Muhammad Ahmad) advocating armed self-defense at a 1963 NAACP national convention in Chicago. He also advocated armed self-defense while volunteering in Greenwood, Mississippi and attempted to acquire resources to support a

statewide defense structure in Mississippi (Allen Kross). See also, Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 90-91.

From 1964-1965 RAM developed their ideological cadres, for which they proclaimed adherence to Marxist-Leninism, but also believed Mao Tse-Tung's advancement of Marxist-Leninist thought for "colored" people could be of great service to Black America. Embracing Marxism and digesting the article from Robert F. Williams, RAM participated in another monumental shift in the Black Freedom Struggle during the 1960s, they shifted from armed-self defense to urban guerilla warfare. Uprisings and spontaneous rebellion were the catalyst for more insurgent tactics RAM wished to employ as Black revolutionaries.⁸² RAM would continue to hope to become an essential political vehicle for transforming the Civil Rights Movement off its moderate and bourgeois course, towards becoming a black revolutionary force.⁸³

By the summer of 1965 Malcolm X had been assassinated (February 21, 1965), Watts had erupted, the war in Vietnam was expanding, and the case for Black America being a domestic colony in the confines of the United States was exacerbated, despite the legislative victories of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. RAM was functioning practically entirely underground, with the use of other organizations as fronts. The development of cadres was imperative to the growing radicalism of the broader Black Freedom Struggle. RAM would travel to cities across the nation to inject revolutionary Black nationalist politics into various Civil Rights organizations. RAM traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, Oakland, California, Chicago, Illinois, Detroit, Michigan and Harlem, New York to develop their cadre. This period was

⁸² Ronald Snellings, *Long Hot Summer, Black America (Fall 1964)*, Snellings was a member of both SNCC and RAM, in this piece Snellings is predicting an "irresistible force" of Black revolt that would meet white America as the Civil Rights Movement continues to meet "castrating" white liberal power blocs.

⁸³ Muhammad Ahmed, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 95-101.

heavily intellectual, RAM was applied Marxist-Leninism Mao Tse-Tung thought to the conditions of Black people to advance theories on Black liberation in the U.S. RAM characterized itself as part of the vanguard of the worldwide socialist revolution.⁸⁴

That same year, 1965, Robert F. Williams published the speech he gave at the “International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression for the Defense of Peace” in *The Crusader* in March of 1965. One of the opening lines of the speech was aligning the African-American struggle with the struggle in Vietnam. Williams wrote, “We, the captive people of the free world of racist America, support the right of all oppressed people to meet violence with violence. We resolutely support the right of all people to self-determination.”⁸⁵ Violence on the part of the oppressed became seen as a universal strategy now that Black America was part of the Third World.

The anti-imperialist sentiment that grew through RAM due to the political significance of Robert F. Williams’s exile was crucial for understanding why armed urban rebellion was a strategy for resistance in the United States. By the end of the 1960s urban rebellion been the perfect storm for enacting guerilla warfare in various Northern cities across the United States like, Detroit, Michigan, Newark, New Jersey, and Cleaveland, Ohio, and these were significant events because RAM had a role in the resistance.

Elizabeth Hinton’s *America on Fire* amasses a comprehensive study of 1960s urban rebellion and its relationship to police violence. Essentially, by the late-1960s, when Black-led urban rebellion peaked in frequency and scale, long-standing paranoia about Black insurgency

⁸⁴ Muhammad Ahmad, “History of RAM: Revolutionary Action Movement,” *Freedom Archives Monograph*, 1979, 31.

⁸⁵ Robert F. Williams, “Speech: The International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression for the Defense of Peace,” *The Crusader*, Vol 6, No 3. (1965), 2.

seeped into the imaginations of white police officers, municipal officers, and federal authorities.⁸⁶ The practices of ordinary policing oftentimes resulted in conflict in urban communities. This dichotomy of the colonized and the colonialists became more pronounced, especially at the height of urban rebellion, due to issues of police violence. In fact, many of the federal reforms that followed rebellions post-1965 were to increase police presence in urban communities, which ultimately exacerbated the issues of brutality, surveillance, and occupation.⁸⁷

The summer of 1967 was characterized as the “long hot summer,” in which urban rebellion reached its peak. Cities in the U.S. North had been in policy battles in densely populated center with overwhelmingly Black and Latino demographics. The conditions of police brutality, housing, busing, and welfare were significant for these communities, the failures within local and city government created the atmosphere for rebellion, which organizations like RAM and the Black Panther Party exploited.⁸⁸ The purpose for exploiting these conditions were to make the Black community aware of the colonial relationship they held with broader society, ultimately amplifying the contradictions of democracy and oppression in the United States. State officials had reason to believe the ever-evolving radicalism that was occurring in Left-wing movements was something to be surveilled and necessary to “root out,” or otherwise neutralize these agitators. RAM was listed as an organization that had massive appeal during the peak of these urban rebellions, alongside the Black Panther Party.

⁸⁶ Jonathan L. Jackson, *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Racial Paranoia*, (New York: Basic Civita Books, 2008).

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*, (London: HarperCollins Publisher, 2021), 14-15, 22-24, 98-99, 104, 124-25.

⁸⁸ Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 82-85, 98-100.

RAM's closest expression of armed guerilla warfare that is documented comes from their Black Guard, the military faction of the organization, which had a paramilitary structure. The Black Guard consisted of Black youth who were part of street gangs (lumpenproletariat), they often agitated against the Vietnam War draft, opposing U.S. imperialism. The Black Guard was built with the intention to train each member so that their ranks would be complete with guerilla fighters, prepared to govern any society, and fight in any guerilla movement worldwide. The Black Guard as a paramilitary front, engaged in revolutionary guerilla warfare, preceded the Afro-American Liberation Army, which eventually became the Black Liberation Army. RAM was instrumental in establishing this necessary clandestine armed force, which consisted of rank-and-file members who largely belonged to the lumpenproletariat class. Moreover, the Black Guard participated in battles against racist police repression in the urban centers. Ultimately, the armed resistance put up against the police led to Muhammad Ahmad's 1967 arrest.⁸⁹

Ideological shifts occurred within RAM towards its dissolution, as is the case for most radical organizations. However, the shifts were not complete due to the arrest of its leadership and repression by the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which specifically targeted RAM as a "black hate group," and Max Stanford (Muhmmad Ahmad) as a potential "Black Messiah."⁹⁰ Despite this effort to neutralize RAM's leadership, by the early 1970s scholar-activist like James Turner would write, "the United States must be seen as a colonial

⁸⁹ Revolutionary Action Movement, "Black Guard Structure and Organization," Revolutionary Action Movement, Black Guard, 1967-1970, *The Black Power Movement: Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996*. See also, John Jones, "A History of the Revolutionary Action Movement," (B.A. History Thesis, Fisk University, 2017), 54. This is significant because the lumpenproletariat, which is a Marxist term, would be the target of radical activists because they were the lowest of the society. The lumpen was oftentimes the target of police because they would be homeless, in street gangs, or Black youth that was unemployed. RAM, and eventually other organizations found immense revolutionary potential in this class of people once organized. This is consequently why they were trained to participate in the revolutionary armed front.

⁹⁰ FBI, "Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups, Internal Security," August 25, 1967, *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)*, Subject: COINTELPRO, 100-4406 Section 1, 1.

oppressor and Blacks as a colonial people within the territorial confines of the most powerful capitalist country in the world.” Turner, like later Muhammad Ahmad, would continue by asserting that Black America was “super exploited” because of the lack of command over land. In the final analysis, Turner would acknowledge national independence of the Black colony as the solution to the domestic colonial situation. Thus, the ideological groundings established by RAM were already seeping into universities and within other revolutionary formations.

Moreover, RAM in its shift, would essentially exist as an organizational primer for the Republic of New Afrika. No longer was the struggle an anarchistic vision of overturning the U.S. political system through armed struggle. Instead, insurgency became tied to land. Nationhood became the most necessary form of self-determination for Black America. In the scholarship on Black Power, RAM, and particularly in its leadership, and the Black Guard should be credited for ushering in a sophisticated analysis of the conditions of Black America through their intellectual theorizing, while simultaneously carrying out insurgent tactic in the fight for local self-determination in the U.S. North.⁹¹

RAM remains important to this conversation in Black Power due to their intellectualism, the utilization of clandestine formations, developing revolutionary Black nationalism, and inciting rebellion against the domestic forces of white supremacy. RAM, through this examination, is foundational in establishing a framework for how to execute insurgency in the United States, which translates to future organizations like the Black Panther Party and Republic of New Afrika. Moreover, RAM as a continuation of this insurgent effort to achieve national independence is best actualized through the Black Liberation Army, following RAM’s

⁹¹ James Turner, “Blacks in the Cities: Land and Self-Determination,” *The Black Scholar* Vol 1, No 6. (1970), 10. And, John H. Bracey, August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America*, Max Stanford’s “Message from Jail,” (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1970), 517

dissolvement. Like RAM's Black Guard, the makeup of the BLA was largely lumpenproletariat. The BLA served as an armed support to the aboveground movement which was facing intense political repression. However, the BLA also served as a vehicle in the broader Black Freedom Struggle as an insurgent effort towards liberating the Black nation, which can largely be attributed to the framework of RAM.

Chapter Four - Revolution is Based on Land!

Prior to the urban uprisings in the late 1960s, 1964 remained a crucial year within the Black Freedom Struggle. Malcolm X, as a foundational figure to many of the radical organizations in the mid-twentieth century, provocatively spoke about land being the basis for all revolutionary struggles. I think it is important to also note the specificity of the language used by Malcolm X where land was connected to revolutionary struggle for the practical purpose of gaining independence from previous colonial powers. As progressive legislation was passed in this same year with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Malcolm X threatened 1964 to still be a year of a racial explosion.⁹²

Mixed into the fold of this blistering speech on *The Black Revolution*, Malcolm X would challenge his audience to think of the United States as an imperialist power, or rather part of the other western colonial powers who have historically been enemies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In doing so Malcolm X made African-American members of the audience see the United States as a colonial entity. Consequently, in the same year, a shift in the African-American identity was at stake, many Black people in the United States would no longer see themselves as American citizens. The Civil Rights Bill of 1964 would not be necessary had African-Americans been protected as American citizens. Malcolm X referred to African-Americans as “Africans who happened to be in America,” essentially arguing that there was nothing American about the

⁹² George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, “The Black Revolution,” (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 47.

Black experience. This particular point transformed the way in which identity was conceptualized and attached to the question of land for revolutionary purposes.⁹³

Furthermore, in Malcolm X's condemnation of the U.S.'s increasing aggression in Vietnam, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Africa, and attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba, he preemptively addressed the same internal hostilities within the U.S. borders. Coupled with Malcolm's fierce condemnation of U.S. imperialism and connecting African-Americans, land, and the various anti-colonial movements happening around the world, he also expressed the legitimacy of armed struggle. Similar to the national independence struggles won in Vietnam, Cuba, and Algeria, it was only a matter of time before the "powder-keg" of resistance erupted, which forced the colonized to pushback against the colonialists, these events were likened to the potentiality of the Black Freedom Struggle.⁹⁴

"Revolution is always based on land [...] Revolutions are based upon bloodshed. Revolutions are never compromising. Revolutions are never based upon negotiations [...] Revolutions overturn systems."⁹⁵ This display of militant fervor altered the way many young activists saw the trajectory of the Black Freedom Struggle. Malcolm X helped push many young activists beyond the bounds of just fighting for racial equality, or integration, instead they were now prepared to advance the struggle towards the attainment of land through whatever means necessary, including insurgency. Malcolm X would conclude with:

⁹³ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, "The Ballot or the Bullet," (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 36.

⁹⁴ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, "The Black Revolution," (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 48-49. See also, George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, "With Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer," (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 106. In December of 1964, opening up before Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X made another internationalist connection that was tied to land and insurgency. Malcolm X said, "in Mississippi we need a Mau Mau. In Alabama we need a Mau Mau. In Georgia we need a Mau Mau. Right here in Harlem, in New York City, we need a Mau Mau." The Mau Mau were a band of freedom fighter in Kenya that drove the British settlers off the land and won Kenya's independence.

⁹⁵ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, "The Black Revolution," (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 50.

“Revolutions are fought to get control of land, to remove the absentee landlord and gain control of the land and the institutions that flow from that land. The Black man has been in a very low condition because he has no control whatsoever over any land, He has been a beggar economically, a beggar politically, a beggar socially, a beggar even when it come to trying to get some education. The past type of mentality that was developed in this colonial system among our people, today is being overcome. And as the young ones come up, they know what they want.”⁹⁶

Organizations like the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), from the previous chapter, revered Malcolm X for many reasons, revolutionary Black nationalism, anti-capitalism, and internationalism, but most notably because he believed African-Americans constituted an oppressed nation in the U.S. “And there is not a system on this earth which has proven to itself more corrupt, more criminal, than this system that in 1964 still colonizes 22 million African-Americans, still enslaves 22 million Afro-Americans.”⁹⁷ As stated in the previous chapter, RAM would eventually reach a shift in the late-1960s where the pursuit of Black nationhood would be the strategy toward self-determination. And internationally, the work of Malcolm X to appeal to African leaders to break ties with the U.S., taking the United States government to the international court as a strategy which would ultimately isolate the U.S. for its treatment of African-Americans, was proven to be brilliant in theory. The ability to see Black America as a domestic colony needing support from the rest of the Third World was a significant development in the analysis of the Black Freedom Struggle by 1964. Many young activists, some in RAM, others who would eventually establish the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA), would see the importance of land and leveraging international law to justify

⁹⁶ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, “The Black Revolution,” (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 57.

⁹⁷ George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, “The Black Revolution,” (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 50

their rights to territorial sovereignty and armed struggle. The pursuit of Black nationhood was attributed to Malcolm X's uncompromising philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism.⁹⁸

But before Malcolm X, the long struggle for land as self-determination was recognized during the period of Reconstruction, post-Civil War. In 1862, General Rufus B. Saxton attempted to hold promise to grant African-Americans land in Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. African-Americans were given permission through Field Order No.15 to take possession of the Sea Islands off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina and in between Jacksonville, Florida, they would be allowed to abandon their rice plantations for this land.⁹⁹ These were the guarantees of every freedman to receive 40 acres and a mule. This distribution of land for freedmen was to be granted by the United States Congress. Ultimately, the distribution of land for African-Americans was reneged upon. This failure on the part of the United States government to deliver on reforms reinforces the colonial question in a conversation where African-Americans, historically, have held no institutional power to change their own destiny through land acquisition.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ In fact, Milton Henry (later Gaidi Obadele), who is one of the Obadele Brothers, was afforded the opportunity to travel with Malcolm X to Egypt in 1964. Following Malcolm's appeal to the African Heads of State to break ties with the United States, support African-Americans liberation struggle in the U.S., Milton Henry interviewed with Malcolm. In the interview Henry asked Malcolm a multitude of questions concerning the human rights abuses of African-Americans, the role African Heads of State can play in the fight for Black liberation throughout the African diaspora, and the organizational objectives of Malcolm's Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Also, as Milton Henry was a close associate of Malcolm X, Imari Obadele, Milton's younger brother, was not far behind. Imari, alongside Gaidi (Milton) would create the *Malcolm X Society* following the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965. The *Malcolm X Society* would eventually adopt Malcolm X's philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism and racial separatism for the purpose of Black self-determination, which was a commitment made to the minister's unmet goals of territorial sovereignty and revolution, to destroy global oppression. Imari, following the establishment of the Republic of New Afrika, in the tradition of Malcolm X wrote "War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine."

⁹⁹ James S. Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy 1865-1876*, (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 49; A study by Carole Bleser supports this claim: *The Promised Land: A Commission, 1869-1890*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969).

¹⁰⁰ Milfred C. Fierce, "Black Struggle for Land During Reconstruction," *The Black Scholar* Vol. 5, No. 5, (1974), 14-15, 17.

Years later, Black members of the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) developed the land question to address African-Americans as a concentrated demographic confined to the U.S. South. This is another way of looking at land before we get to Malcolm X and the Republic of New Afrika. For the CPUSA, land and national independence were a part of a Leninist analysis applied to the Negro Question¹⁰¹ that ultimately helped communists like Harry Haywood create the Black Belt Thesis.¹⁰² Organizations like the Revolutionary Action Movement and the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika are part of a tradition of radical thought that saw African-Americans as a domestic colony, or an “oppressed nation within a nation.”¹⁰³

In 1948, Harry Haywood argued that the roots of American racism are “deeper sunk as they are in the unsolved land question.” Haywood continued by pointing to the objective condition that would make nationhood plausible for African-Americans, “any serious examination will show that the Negro population of the Black Belt is tied together by myriad internal bonds, by all facets and agencies of modern capitalism, has all the prerequisites for existence as a nation.” More specifically, Haywood argued that the Black Belt, which resided as the heartland for African-Americans, was the epitome of an internal colony for American imperialism. The U.S. South, which held the largest concentration of African-Americans, functioned as the raw material appendage of the society, where African-Americans remained the super-exploited class in this context.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Harry Haywood, “Lenin and Negro Question in the United States,” *Resolution of the Communist International*, 1930.

¹⁰² Harry Haywood, “For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question,” *Pamphlet*, 1958, 1-38.

¹⁰³ Imari Abubakari Obadele, “War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine,” *Malcolm X Society* (1968), 10-14. See also, Max Stanford (later Muhammad Ahmad), “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American Student,” in *Liberator*, January 15, 1965.

¹⁰⁴ Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publisher, 1948), 16-18

In the same year, Haywood, alongside Gwendolyn Mildlo Hall, argued that the global anti-colonial upsurge was a threat to the fragmented status quo, where the world system of imperialism, the United States in particular, was in a battle against ascending socialist revolutions and victorious anti-colonial revolutions. Essentially, these anti-colonial victories were significant to African-Americans and their movement towards a revolutionary nationalism.¹⁰⁵ Paired with the conditions of an internal colony, anti-colonial and evolving radicalism served as the growth of revolutionary nationalism for the purpose of struggling for land (i.e., nationhood).

In an effort to avoid the argument of revolutionary nationalism being “communist dogma,” Harry Haywood continued to argue about the legitimacy of self-determination, self-governance, and anti-imperialism in positions to address the colonial situation confronting African Americans. This decolonial constructing of a struggle towards national independence by the Communist Party U.S.A is important to the Black Radical Tradition. As the Republic of New Afrika reinforced this process of decolonization through land attainment, the connections drawn between the CPUSA and the NAIM is also important to the development of anti-Black state repression that exacerbated the treachery of internal colonialism. Scholars like Robin D.G. Kelley make this radical connection between the CPUSA and the RNA, but particularly for the argument of engaging Maoism as an ideological framework within the worldwide Black revolution.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publisher, 1948), 15.



Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1 Paul Karolczyk, “Subjugated Territory: The New Afrikan Independence Movement and the Space of Black Power,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2014), 117. Black Belt map on CPUSA 1932 national election campaign poster Source: Communist Party of the United States of America, 1932. It is important to note Queen Mother Moore is also an important figure to both the CPUSA and the NAIM. As a staunch advocate for reparation and supporter of the Black Belt argument, Queen Mother Moore was also a Pan-Africanist who supported Marcus Garvey’s UNIA. By 1968, Queen Mother Moore was a founding member of the PG-RNA. In fact, at the 1968 Black Government Conference, Moore proposed the name “New Africa” which was accepted as the name of the new Black nation-state. Queen Mother Moore, Harry Haywood, Marcus Garvey, Robert F. Williams, and Malcolm X are all parents of the modern New Afrikan Independence Movement.

Nonetheless, the return of the Black Belt to radical politics in the 1960s was important to understanding the class character of revolutionary struggle. The Revolutionary Action Movement, as an ideological foundation to Black Power politics adhered to Marxist-Leninism and Maoism which forced activists to see the African-American community as the most

revolutionary sector of the working-class. As an answer to the cry for Black Power, revolutionary Black nationalism within the structure of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika was necessary in bringing the long-awaited installation of the Black nation-state to rectify the material conditions of Black America. Moreover, Robin D.G. Kelley's *Hammer and Hoe* is a necessary contribution to understanding the Alabama Communist Party and the revolutionary potential of the Black working-class in the U.S. South, particularly during the Great Depression.¹⁰⁶ The Black working-class, particularly the lumpenproletariat, remained central in the demographics most needed to be organized for revolutionary social transformation towards self-determination.

Following the assassination of Dr. King, in April of 1968, Mao Tse-Tung, the revered internationalist of the People's Republic of China, reinvigorated the Black working-class in the U.S. Mao Tse-Tung empowered the righteous urban uprisings, which occurred directly after Dr. King's assassination. Mao Tse-Tung said, "a new clarion call to the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class."¹⁰⁷ These remarks captured the nature of the worldwide Black revolution, which needed class character. The return of the Black Belt in the 1960s would be essential for understanding that the racist inequality of capitalism created an "underdevelopment" across five states in the U.S. South. African-Americans remained in a perpetual state of poverty in the poorest states of the country, which also held the largest demographics of African-Americans (Louisiana, Mississippi,

¹⁰⁶ Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communist During the Great Depression*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 1990), 1-10, 19-28.

¹⁰⁷ Mao Tse-Tung, *Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-Tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China, in Support of the Afro-American Struggle Against Violent Repression*, April 16, 1968, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1968).

Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina), thus making the U.S. South the bedrock of the Black poor.

An organization that is commonly discussed as having lineage tied to Malcolm X, land, and the Black Belt is the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). The Republic of New Afrika and its Provisional Government was a revolutionary Black nationalist organization with the aim of establishing a sovereign Black nation-state in the Black Belt U.S. South. Drawing on the Black Radical Tradition, this decolonial analysis was developed because of the U.S. South historically held the largest concentration of African-American people. Few scholars deny the Republic of New Afrika's militancy;¹⁰⁸ however, some Black Power scholarship isolates the organization as solely a reparation movement. The Republic of New Afrika and the pursuit of land to develop a Black nation-state is not often discussed in nuanced interpretation on Black Power.¹⁰⁹ Though reparations were a key demand in the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM), it was not the only contribution this group made to Black Power. In fact, reparations were a compliment to the broader objectives tied to radicalism, like land, revolutionary Black nationalism, dismantling capitalism and imperialism, and eventually Pan-Africanism. Land is an essential element to the philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism, which is central to the political objectives of the RNA.

¹⁰⁸ William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and African American Culture 1965-1975*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 144-154. Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 186-210. Edward Onaci, *Free The Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2020), 4-14. Sam Klug, "What, Then, of the Land?: Territoriality, International Law, and the Republic of New Afrika," *Journal of International Law Vol 23*, (2020), 185-187.

¹⁰⁹ Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dream: The Black Radical Imagination*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2022), 124-134.

Black Insurgency uses the RNA to extend the conversation on Black Power. The conceptualizing of revolutionary armed struggle from clandestine politico-military units that weaken U.S. imperialism, the use of international law, and the right to territorial sovereignty as an oppressed nation are all important to this growing conversation on land and its relationship to Black Power. Using the Republic of New Afrika, their struggle for land, their internationalism, the relationships with Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, and its connection to the Black Liberation Army, demonstrates the potentiality of an attempt at weakening to U.S. imperialism, while also, an act of moving toward Black self-determination.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur is an example of an activist with extensive overlap within the New Afrikan Independence Movement. Shakur was a revolutionary nationalist in various organizations connected to the struggle for land, self-determination, and self-defense. Dr. Mutulu Shakur was a member of the Revolutionary Action Movement in its late stages, proclaimed allegiance to the Republic of New Afrika, and committed New Afrikan Freedom Fighter in the clandestine Black Liberation Army. As a renowned revolutionary nationalist and developing internationalist, Dr Shakur stated, “the only way Black people in America will be recognized in the world will be if we have a nation that operates in the interests of our people.”¹¹⁰ These were Shakur’s remarks as a teenager joining the New Afrikan Independence Movement and proclaiming allegiance to the new Black nation-state while under the tutelage of disciples of Malcolm X.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Santi Elijah Holley, *An Amerikan Family: The Shakurs and the Nation They Created*, (New York and Boston: Mariner Books, 2023), 110.

¹¹¹ Akinyele Umoja, “Straight Ahead: The Life of Resistance of Dr. Mutulu Shakur,” *The Black Scholar* Vol. 23, No. 1-2, (January – June 2022), 6-8, 9-13, 21-23, 27.

Amongst the rank-and-file, otherwise known as the conscious New Afrikan citizens, the Republic of New Afrika's position on territorial sovereignty was clear and unambiguous. According to the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG-RNA), the states Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina constituted "subjugated territory" of the Black republic. The basic objective of Afro-Americans, upon the PG-RNA, should be to liberate this land upon which Black people long have lived and, with their blood and sweat, had developed.¹¹² However, Imari Obadele was not quick to assert the RNA as the new "vanguard" of the Black revolution with this claim to territorial independence.

Inspired by Malcolm X's desire to utilize the United Nations, many Black Power activists saw international law as a potential promising alternative to the U.S. legal framework.¹¹³ This is important considering that many African-American activists grew discontent with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act being unable to provide material benefit to African-Americans, specifically in the U.S. North. However, with notable support in October of 1968, a plebiscite was held for the Black community to determine the national destiny for African-Americans. This was also revised into the Black Panther Party's ten-point-program. Nonetheless, the Republic of New Afrika's Imari Obadele drafted a programmatic statement, entitled "The Anti-Depression Program of the Republic of New Afrika," in which he cited plebiscites in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, African nations who had gained independence from France and Britain, and the contested region of Kashmir in support of the RNA's claim.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Imari Abubakari Obadele, "The Republic of New Afrika—An Independent Black Nation," *The Black World*, Vol 20. (May 1971), 81-82. See also, Imari Abubakari Obadele, "The Struggle is for Land," *The Black Scholar*, Vol 3, (1972), 24 & 32.

¹¹³ Sam Klug, "What, Then, of the Land?: Territoriality, International Law, and the Republic of New Afrika," *Journal of International Law* Vol 23, (2020), 190. See also, George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks*, "The Ballot or the Bullet," (New York: Grove Press, 1990), 35.

¹¹⁴ Reference to other plebiscites are found in "The Anti-Depression Program of the Republic of New Afrika," in Obadele, *Foundations*, No.10, (1975), 77.

This plebiscite was important to the question of internal colonialism, particularly because it would potentially remove the identification of African-Americans from their colonial captors, and newly identify Black people in the U.S. as “New Afrikans.” This identity would better reflect the position of subjugation, the history of enslavement, and the current condition of internal colonialism. Thus, advancing an argument for reparations, a redress of the current conditions within Black America, and legitimatizing a succession from the United States to establish sovereignty territory (i.e., the Republic of New Afrika). What also makes this argument uniquely important is that under Article 51 of the UN Charter, a sovereign territory would be under the protection of the United Nations to violently resist if infringed upon.¹¹⁵ This is important to the argument of Black Power because it re-conceptualizes how identity plays a role in national independence for the purpose of authorizing armed struggle. Lastly, this is also important within the context of the FBI’s illegal Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) which violently infringed upon dissenting Black nationalist organizations.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, “Chapter VII: Article 51,” October 25, 1945.
<https://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>

¹¹⁶ Ward Churchill & Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI’s Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1990), 117-123.

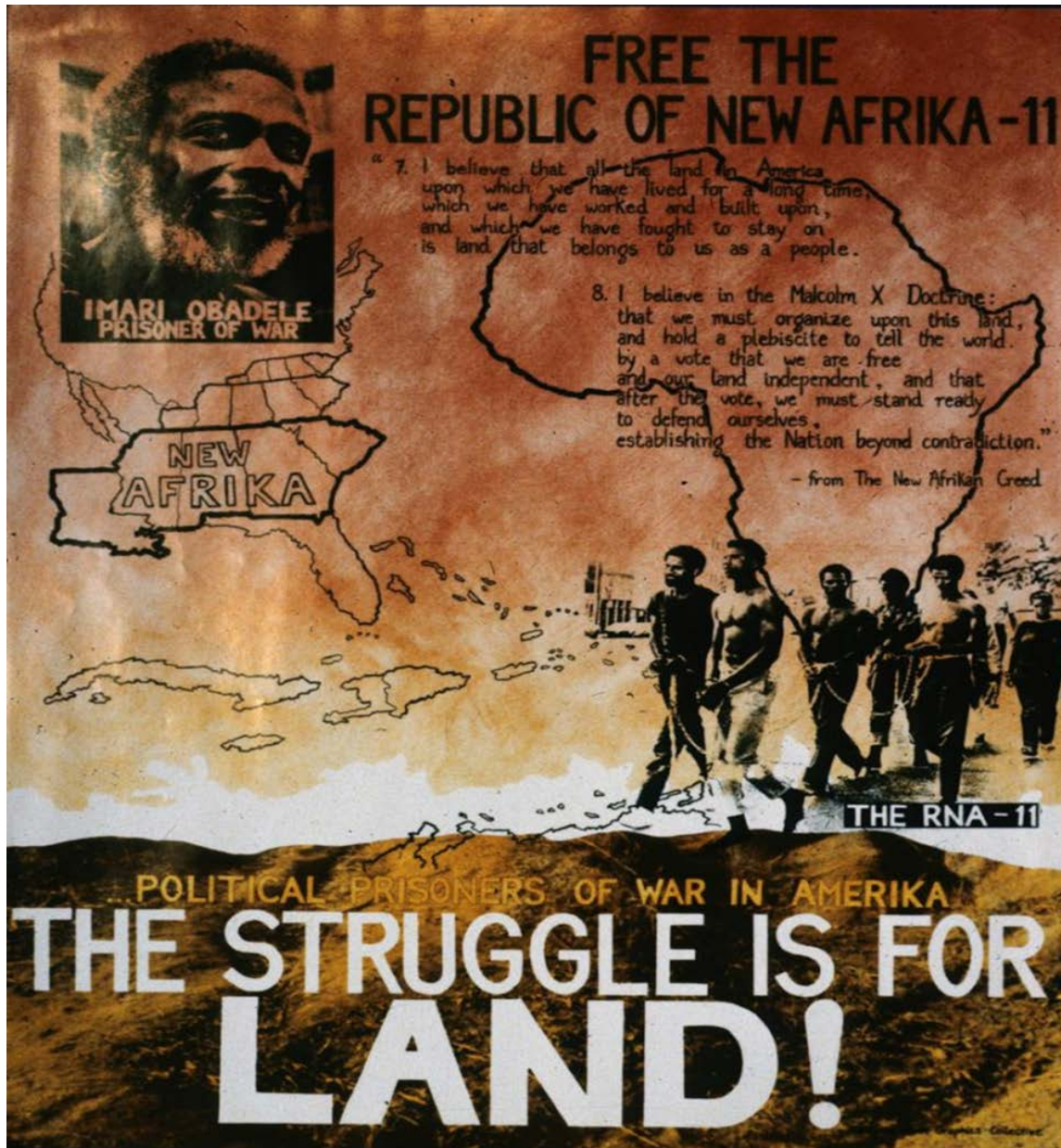


Figure 9 13

Figure 3.2 Paul Karolczyk, “Subjugated Territory: The New Afrikan Independence Movement and the Space of Black Power,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2014), 301. RNA map symbol in Madame Binh Graphics Collective poster, circa 1979-1980 Source: Mary Patten, *Revolution as an Eternal Dream: The Exemplary Failure of the Madame Binh Graphics Collective* (2011), courtesy of Mary Patten, artist, 2014.

In the early part of the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, Imari Obadele published an essay entitled “War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine.” And much like Harry Haywood, this essay by Obadele provided the objective

conditions for the pursuit of national independence. However, unlike Haywood, Obadele argued the inevitable warfare that would occur to surrender white control over African-Americans. Obadele argued the importance of state power to exercise control over the institutional apparatuses. This state power needed to be in control of African-American, or rather, a New Afrikan government. This argument gave credence to the position of a Black nation-state.¹¹⁷

Land was such an important feature to self-determination for the Republic of New Afrika because the Provisional Government was in a power struggle with the United States to win support of African-Americans, driving them away from institutional white rule. The development of the Republic of New Afrika was rooted in the long-standing Black nationalism principle of self-sufficiency that Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association enforced, and later Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam reinforced. Yusufu Sonebeyatta argued that as the RNA was working to win consent over African-Americans, a growth of political consciousness through unity (Umoja) had to be cultivated. As important as the land was so was the revolutionary culture, which would sustain the establishment of the new Black nation-state. The building of power and leveraging internationalism was imperative for the RNA to bolster sovereignty. The Republic of New Afrika by building an alternative society had adopted Ujamaa as the economic order to compete with the capitalist economic model which violently exploited African-Americans for centuries. Ujamaa was adopted from the reorganization of Tanzania following their revolution. For the Republic of New Afrika, Ujamaa aimed to place the major means of production and trade in the trust of the state. The fundamental objectives for the sovereign land through Ujamaa would be 1) to provide for every individual in the society five essentials of decent human life: food, housing, clothing, health service, education, and a sixth

¹¹⁷ Imari A. Obadele, "War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine," *The Malcolm X Society* (1968), 19-20.

essential—defense; 2) to provide for the nation as a whole a sufficient surplus wealth to achieve our world freedom commitment, and afterwards, the full blown pursuit of exploration, research, and inquiry.¹¹⁸

An example of the unrelenting ability of the white power structure to relinquish control of the African-American community was through the purging of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika on two occasions. First on March 29th, 1969, when Detroit police fired 800 rounds of ammunition into New Bethel Church during an RNA conference. The second assault on the Provisional Government was August 17th, 1971, which FBI agents and Jackson, Mississippi policemen raided the “liberated zone” established by the RNA, which also housed the office of then President Imari Obadele. Eleven members of the Republic of New Afrika were seized during this raid, and this was characterized as a war on the Black nation. This also created a campaign to Free the RNA-11.¹¹⁹

In lieu of the intense state repression against the revolutionary Black nationalist organization, the RNA created the New Afrikan Security Force, which trained the entire PG-RNA for paramilitary confrontation with white supremacists and/or anyone seeking to invade the liberated territory. The Republic of New Afrika as an insurgent force in the United States found it necessary to consolidate the most advanced forces of the New Afrikan Independence Movement to protect the building of the Black nation-state. This included the Black Liberation Army (BLA), which is often referred to as a spin-off of the Black Panther Party (BPP), but actually consisted of various conscious Black prisoners, organized street personnel, former members of

¹¹⁸ Yusufu Sonebeyatta & Joseph F. Brooks, “Ujamaa for Land and Power,” *The Black Scholar* Vol. 3, No. 2 (1971), 14-16. See also, Imari Abubakari Obadele, “The Struggle is for Land,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 3. No. 6, THE BLACK COLONY U.S.A, (February 1972), 25-27.

¹¹⁹ Chokwe Lumumba, “Short History of the U.S. War on the R.N.A.,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (1981), 72-75.

the BPP, and conscious New Afrikan citizens. The PG-RNA had no control over the Black Liberation Army, however Black clandestine units would be deemed useful for delivering a “second strike” to U.S. imperialism.¹²⁰ This absolutely caught the attention of the state because the constitution of the Republic of New Afrika explicitly states that “the destruction of the American empire in North America is imperative to the total liberation of the New Afrikan nation and the world. The organization is committed to the destruction of the empire by liberation of the colonies within.”¹²¹

The Republic of New Afrika had a unique position that sought to cripple the United States on two fronts. These fronts were different from the Revolutionary Action Movement geographically and different from the Black Panther Party tactically. In waging a “people’s war” against U.S. imperialism the first front would consist of the New Afrikan Security Force, the Black Legion, and the conscious citizens of the Republic of New Afrika, who would protect the territory from being invaded. On the second front, the RNA would remain sympathetic to the guerilla movements in the U.S. North that could wage the “second strike” on industry powerful enough to divide U.S. forces.¹²²

Different from the Black Panther Party which existed as an aboveground movement, the RNA had built-in an army and a government. As the Black Panther Party faced intense repression like the RNA, many BPP members were forced underground, particularly members from the Harlem, New York chapter of the BPP. The emergence of the Black Liberation Army became the

¹²⁰ Imari Abubakari Obadele, “The Republic of New Afrika—An Independent Black Nation,” *The Black World*, Vol 20. (May 1971), 84. See also, Imari Abubakari Obadele, “The Struggle is for Land,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 3, (1972), 33.

¹²¹ Chokwe Lumumba, “The Roots of the New Afrikan Independence Movement.” *Rebuild! A New Afrikan Independence Movement Periodical* (1985), 24-26.

¹²² Imari Abubakari Obadele, “The Republic of New Afrika—An Independent Black Nation,” *The Black World*, Vol 20. (May 1971), 88. See also, Imari Abubakari Obadele, “The Struggle is for Land,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol 3, (1972), 34-35.

offensive force to counter this repression, the political destiny was shifted toward a national liberation movement in which the Republic of New Afrika best encapsulated. This does not mean the Black Panther Party philosophy was abandoned, but rather it was a new approach to revolutionary methods for many members who no longer had a political home due to the intense political repression by local police agencies and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

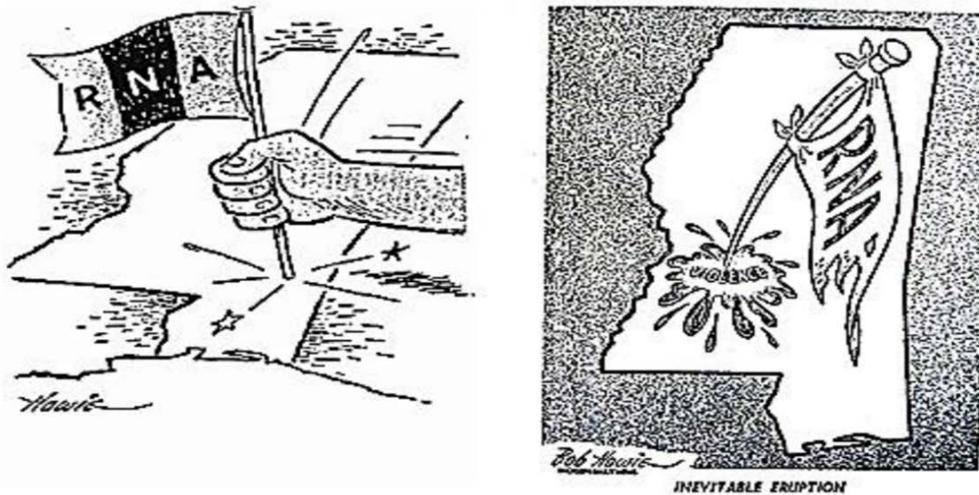


Figure 3.3 Paul Karolczyk, “Subjugated Territory: The New Afrikan Independence Movement and the Space of Black Power,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2014), 302. Anti-RNA political cartoon maps by Bob Howie, 1970 (left) and 1971 (right) Sources: “New Africa: Meeting Set to Form Black Nation,” Jackson Daily News, July 30, 1970; “RNA Eradication Over” Editorial, Jackson Daily News, August 19, 1971, p. 16. This image is anti-RNA propaganda put in a newspaper to have African-Americans reject the movement towards national independence.

Because these radical organizations maintained this position of Black America being a domestic colony, under International Law, the Black Liberation Army and Republic of New Afrika specifically, relied on this colonial analogy to express their right to resist racial violence through armed struggle.¹²³ The New Afrikan Independence Movement, which these radical

¹²³ Sam Klug, “What, Then, of the Land?: Territoriality, International Law, and the Republic of New Afrika,” *Journal of International Law* Vol 23, (2020), 194-195. Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, “New Afrikan Declaration of Independence,” *New Afrikan People’s Organization Official Document IV (a)*, (1968), 1-2, 3-4, 5.

organizations were attached to, particularly saw itself as part of the worldwide Black revolution that Malcolm X described. Examples for how to wage an anti-colonial war were set by China, Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba, Palestine, Guinea-Bissau, and many others. But these organizations in the Black Freedom Struggle possessed the most fulfilling task, knowing that an internal war waged to carve out much of United States' southern border would cause a tremendous blow to the U.S.'s ability to conduct itself as an imperialist power abroad, lightening the burden of other oppressed nations.¹²⁴ In waging a war for national independence while in pursuit of a Black nation-state, the BLA and the RNA used international law to claim territorial sovereignty from their oppressor, while simultaneously proceeding with a tradition of armed resistance against white supremacy.

The methods of social transformation by the Republic of New Afrika are unique to the conversation of Black Power, particularly because of the approaches at attaining land for self-determination. The Republic of New Afrika can be characterized as insurgent for three particular functional approaches, 1) the pursuit of the land to establish a Black nation-state separate from white rule; 2) the use of self-defense, but also a willingness to exert an armed political assault on the colonial apparatus if power is not surrendered from over the African-American community. And; 3) the re-identification process, which removes the "African-American" label from African-descended people and replaces it with the New Afrikan identity. The creation of the New Afrikan identity legitimized the type of struggle looking to be waged under International Law. These tactics reconceptualized the how African-Americans envisioned self-determination through connecting anti-imperialism, reparation, and nationhood to a conversation on land.

¹²⁴ Robert F. Williams, "On the Republic of New Africa," *The Crusader* Vol. 10, No. 1 (November 1968), 4-5, 9-14.

Chapter Five - Insurgent Theory of Change

The Black Liberation Army as a force within the New Afrikan Independence Movement held various overlapping activists within its ranks that believed in land and independence. For example, Sekou Odinga became a citizen of the Republic of New Afrika while remaining a section leader of the South Bronx chapter of the Black Panther Party. Dual membership in the Black Panther Party and the RNA was not prohibited, although it was also not common. Sekou Odinga, alongside other dual members, like Assata Shakur, Safiya Bukhari, and Bilal Sunni-Ali, utilized the 1968 revision to the BPP's ten-point-program to demonstrate the tactical usefulness of their dual membership.¹²⁵ This new revision by the BPP called for a United Nations-supervised plebiscite within the Black community to determine their national destiny. This was executed by the Republic of New Afrika and drafted by Imari Obadele, which received notable support in October 1968.¹²⁶ These now citizens of the RNA would identify as New Afrikans and wage the most advanced phase of armed struggle the United States had seen contemporarily as part of the Black Liberation Army.

The overlap of the Black Panther Party, Black Liberation Army, and the Republic of New Afrika is important to the tradition of resistance as they are all connected to this philosophy of self-defense. Also, these organizations all faced a unique level of repression that garnered many of them to be classified as U.S. held Political Prisoner/Prisoners of War for their participation as

¹²⁵ Santi Elijah Holley, *An Amerikan Family: The Shakurs and the Nation They Created*, (New York and Boston: Mariner Books, 2023), 111-112.

¹²⁶ Sam Klug, "What, Then, of the Land?: Territoriality, International Law, and the Republic of New Afrika," *Journal of International Law Vol 23*, (2020), 191.

insurgents in the Black Freedom Struggle. This position of armed self-defense that evolved due to the contributions and influence of Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X created the perfect storm for state repression to seek to neutralize the leadership of these movements.

The Black Panther Party is a commonly studied organization in the field of Black Power scholarship. The Black Panther Party's shift into factions following Huey P. Newton's release from prison and Elridge Cleaver's exile is imperative for understanding the severity of COINTELPRO's ability to create ideological rifts within the leadership of movements. Nonetheless, this state repression created organizational fractioning, which was important to the history of the Black Liberation Army and their connection to the land and national independence through armed insurgency. The Black Panther Party is not a focus in this research, but the Black Liberation Army cannot be discussed without first engaging the BPP.

To discuss the Black Panther Party requires a comprehensive understanding of the function of the organization as an aboveground formation. The Black Panther Party called for executive mandate number one on May 2nd, 1967, which called for Black people to arm themselves. This mandate was ordered following the racist California state legislature that sought to keep the Black community disarmed in the face of white supremacist terror, that was happening in cities across the country. As the Black Panther Party used the language of genocide to describe the imperialist war occurring in Vietnam, they also connected the African-American existence in this country to that of the Japanese-Americans who were subjected to internment camps. In an attempt to connect all oppressed and colonized people to the issue of white supremacy in America, the BPP encouraged Black people in particular to arm themselves against

the growing fascism of the United States, that had extended themselves into Vietnam, and the increased police repression of Black ghettos in North America.¹²⁷

The Black Panther Party was correct in their analysis of the inevitable police repression that specifically targeted their movement.¹²⁸ By 1969 the leadership of the Black Panther Party would have seen roughly five members killed, three members jailed, and four members in exile. The BPP had multiple chapters that were important to the radical re-imagination of U.S. society, but the New York chapter, specifically the Harlem branch of the Black Panther Party, is argued to have been the most unique because of the demographics of Harlem, and the entrenched legacy of Black nationalism imbedded into Harlem because of figures like, Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X.¹²⁹

On April 1st, 1969, twenty-one members of the New York Black Panther Party were arrested on conspiracy charges to blow up the New York City subway and other supposed targets. The arrest of the New York BPP 21 was a substantial victory by the state to remove this revolutionary leadership from the streets. However, this was a significant blow to the aboveground movement happening in New York. Renowned nationalist and intellectual Muhammad Ahmad of the Revolutionary Action Movement characterized the extreme repression in the year 1969, where 348 members of the BPP were arrested for serious charges, the use of physical violent repression, psychological counterinsurgency, as a method of genocide by the

¹²⁷ Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People*, (San-Fransico, California: City Lights Books, 2009), 7-8

¹²⁸ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Black Classic Press, 1990), 37-53.

¹²⁹ Robert F. Williams, "On the Republic of New Africa," *The Crusader*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (November 1968), 11-13.; See also, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, "Dhoruba Bin-Wahad and the 55th Anniversary of the Arrest of the Panther 21," Interviewed by Dr. Jared A. Ball, IMixWhatILike, *Black Power Media*, April 2, 2024, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR2B3-uTrUM&t=1134s>

state.¹³⁰ This unprecedented attack on the most progressive forces in the United States led many members of the Black Panther Party underground for the purpose of organizing an offensive to counter the attacks occurring against the aboveground movement. This tactical response to repression is what makes the BLA an insurgent force in the Black Freedom Struggle, particularly as they sought to protect the Black community and the existing aboveground movement experiencing the same repression.

Scholarly interpretations of the Black Liberation Army straddle many fences, the organization has been nationally labeled a terrorist group, on the other hand, in radical spaces the organization and its members are revered for their decades of courageous activity. William Rosenau argued that the Black Liberation Army was a domestic terrorist organization that predated counterterrorism action that followed 9/11. According to Rosenau, the BLA is underexplored in the field of counterterrorism. Thus, Rosenau argues that counterterrorist specialists lack perspective on homegrown threats on the United States.¹³¹ On the contrary, FBI documents show deliberate steps taken by the state's most sophisticated agents to imprison, or otherwise neutralize, various members attached to the New Afrikan Independence Movement, which include the Revolutionary Action Movement, Black Panther Party, Black Liberation Army, and the Republic of New Afrika. Anna A. Meier demonstrates that the anti-Black counterterrorism practiced during this period against Black liberation forces, particularly the

¹³⁰ See, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Anthony X Bradshaw, Malik Dinguswa, Terry D. Long, Mark Cook, & James Haskins, "Genocide Waged Against the Black Nation Through Behavior Modification/Orchestrated by Counterinsurgency and Low-Intensity Warfare in the U.S. Penal System," *Presented for Consideration by the Research Committee on International Law and Black Freedom Fighters in the United States*, (1988).

¹³¹ William Rosenau, "Our Backs Are Against the Wall: The Black Liberation Army and Domestic Terrorism in 1970s America," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol 36, No. 2 (2013), 176-179.

Black Liberation Army, reinforce racism and the political terrorism that the Black Liberation Army existed to mitigate.¹³²

Akinyele Umoja, in his article “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” displays the long evolution of the BLA. This article shows the BLA’s connection to RAM as an ideological foundational organization, the Republic of New Afrika as a political objective toward self-determination, and the continuation of the BLA as long as anti-Black racial oppression exist.¹³³ Dylan Rodriguez and Orisanmi Burton look at the BLA as a successful insurgent organization. The BLA is so successful that the prisons, by way of the state, become these dominions of colonial war, or rather domestic war zones, that seek to subvert, neutralize, or otherwise strategically annihilate Black revolutionaries.¹³⁴ And lastly, Gaidi Faraj’s dissertation on “Unearthing the Underground,” is a comprehensive analysis of the radical Black underground with an extensive look at the BLA. Faraj argues that the BLA is ignored by conventional academicians because of the BLA’s willingness to engage in domestic armed struggle.¹³⁵

Black Insurgency explores the BLA as a clandestine organization working to strategically shift power into the hands of the New Afrikan Independence Movement for the purpose of establishing the Republic of New Afrika. There is an interesting connection between the Black Panther Party and the eventual citizens of the Republic of New Afrika, primarily because of state

¹³² Anna A. Meier, “Terror as Justice, Justice as Terror: Counterterrorism and anti-Black racism in the United States,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2022), 86-87, 90-95.

¹³³ Akinyele Umoja, “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” *New Political Science*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1999), 132-133, 146-148.

¹³⁴ Dylan Rodriguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime*, “Domestic War Zones and the Extremities of Power: Conceptualizing the U.S. Prison Regime,” (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 47-61; Orisanmi Burton, *Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression, and the Long Attica Revolt*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023), 4-7.

¹³⁵ Gaidi Faraj, “*Unearthing the Underground: A Study of Radical Activism in the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army*,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkley, 2007), 2.

repression, which I think forces underground BPP member to find a new political vehicle, which ultimately becomes the RNA. However, in exploring the BLA, there is a search throughout the limited resources to find their theories for social transformation and how those theories are connected to land.

Assata Shakur, who is perhaps one of the most recognizable figures from the Black Liberation Army stated how the BLA arose, which pushes back, but does not negate the fact that political repression played a substantial role in their ascension:

The idea of the Black Liberation Army emerged from conditions in Black communities: conditions of poverty, indecent housing, massive unemployment, poor medical care, and inferior education. The idea came about Black people were not free or equal in this country. Because ninety percent of the men and women in this country's prisons are Black and Third World. Because ten-year-old children are shot down in our streets. Because dope has saturated our communities, preying on disillusionment and frustration of our children. The concept of the BLA arose because of the political, social, and economic oppression of Black people in this country. And where there is oppression, there will be resistance. The BLA is part of that resistance movement. The Black Liberation Army stands for freedom and justice for all people.¹³⁶

The BLA is commonly discussed as a clandestine organization, but according to some of its members the BLA was less clandestine and more cell-orientated. Nonetheless, the organization did not operate above ground which made it increasingly harder for the state to infiltrate and purge the organization for its revolutionary activities.

Orisanmi Burton who extensively examines Black radicalism has eloquently stated that the underground was a “geographical metaphor for a condition of militant refusal and exteriority to respectability, visibility, governability, and upward mobility under racial capitalism and

¹³⁶ Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*, (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 169.

colonial war.” The BLA existed as a people’s army organized to disrupt the internal colonial conditions that plagued the Black community. While underground, in existence as a politico-military force, the actions of the BLA included, financial expropriations, prison breaks, transportation of fugitives, and armed offensives against state infrastructure and personnel.¹³⁷

The BLA existed as one of the most hostile expressions of the Black Radical Tradition in modern times.

In 1977 the Black Liberation Army published a Study Guide to articulate their positions for waging a revolutionary struggle inside the borders of the United States. In the section “Whiter New Afrika,” the BLA, in solidarity with the Republic of New Afrika, attempted to answer the question on where to relocate the Black nation pending a failure to ignite a proletarian revolution in the United States. While discussing the lands of the Republic of New Afrika the BLA stated:

“to make the imperialist surrender these lands may be too much for the imperialists themselves to handle. While they substantially control the institutions of power and the opinion-shaping machinery, yet we make it sufficiently hot for them to seek a solution in keeping our demands, the masses of white workers who live in this area , and necessarily have to be “dispossessed” are likely to raise such a strenuous and violent objections that the oligarchy may not be able to persuade the to comply, or overcome the opposition. In spite of this possibility, we should not relinquish our claim to these lands. Because it is a starting point with considerable legitimacy and moral justification.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Orisanmi Burton, *Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression, and the Long Attica Revolt*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2023), 96-97.

¹³⁸ *Collected Works on the Black Liberation Army*, Vol. 1, “Black Liberation Army Study Guide,” (Anti-Copyright-Rookery Press, 2023), 11-12.

This position demonstrated an allegiance to the pursuit of a Black nation-state as the Republic of New Afrika had considerable legitimacy and moral justification for the attainment of the land for Black self-determination.

In that same year, 1977, the BLA continued to make claim for pursuit of a Black nation. The BLA argued within the context of the nature of the Black revolution, “the Black nation boldly seeks a land base in which our people can live in peace, kinship, and human dignity.”¹³⁹ The BLA would continue by arguing that the purpose of this new land for the Black nation would be to cut loose from all ties with the capitalist economic order, replacing it with socialism for the purpose of an even distribution wealth. This was to be done through a revolutionary political and military process, the BLA existed to carry out these legitimate acts to restore political, social and military sovereignty, essentially rectifying the internal colonial question.

By the early 1980s the BLA was nationally known for the Brink’s Truck Heist in which participants of the BLA, Weather Underground,¹⁴⁰ and other associates were involved in. Among those convicted for this financial expropriation were Kuwasi Balagoon, Mutulu Shakur, Sekou Odinga, and Mytayari Sundiata, all of whom were conscious citizens of the Republic of New Afrika. As conscious citizens that were involved in a revolutionary struggle, banks were seen as mechanisms for finance capital, which exploited the Black nation. Essentially, as citizen of the Republic of New Afrika and freedom fighter within the rank of the Black Liberation, these Black revolutionaries found themselves engaged in a war for national independence against the apparatuses that exploited their people for centuries. Though this act seems illegitimate to a

¹³⁹ *Collected Works on the Black Liberation Army, Vol. 1*, “Black Liberation Army Study Guide,” (Anti-Copyright-Rookery Press, 2023), 2-3.

¹⁴⁰ Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*, (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2006), 245-255.

freedom struggle, BLA members would argue that the context in which the struggle was being waged must be reconceptualized. Black Power must stretch beyond the parameters of what the aboveground formations are doing to ensure that the liberation movement is successful. Thus, members of the BLA found it necessary for participants to engage in criminalized activities that could ideally leave no credible link back to the aboveground movement.

Kuwasi Balagoon, one of the convicted BLA members and RNA citizens stated in his trial hearing:

When I say we New Afrikan people are colonized, I mean that our lives socially, economically, politically, with the exception of our war of liberation, are controlled by other people, by imperialists euro-Americans. Imperialist euro-Americans tell us where to live and under what conditions, euro-American invaders, colonizers, decide what laws we should obey and what jobs we will get. Its no mystery why such a proportion of GIs, hospital workers, domestic workers, farmworkers, or athletes are New Afrikans or why we are ten percent of the population within the confines of the U.S. and fifty percent of the prison population. We suffer fifty percent unemployment. Likewise, there is no mystery why the Black Liberation Army was formed well over a decade ago and, despite captures and many instances of torture and executions on the part of the U.S. government, has managed to continue to fill cops full of holes and continue to enjoy our people's support, in spite of raids and threats by the U.S. government and outright political and military blunders on our part.¹⁴¹

Kuwasi as a revolutionary Black nationalist maintained his legitimate charge against colonialism and U.S. imperialism, which he felt rendered New Afrikans captives on American soil, needed to be liberated through armed struggle and the Republic of New Afrika.

¹⁴¹ Kuwasi Balagoon, *A Soldier's Story: Revolutionary Writings from a New Afrikan Anarchist*, (Dexter, Michigan: PM Press, 2019), 99.

The BLA, as one of the most advanced forces in the Black Freedom Struggle never abandoned their theories for social transformation, insurgency in pursuit of liberating the Black nation-state was at the crux of all of their activities. In the protracted pursuit of national independence many BLA members were conscious citizens of the Republic of New Afrika, including Sekou Odinga, Assata Shakur, Mutulu Shakur, Safiya Bukhari, Albert “Nuh” Washington, Kuwasi Balagoon, and Jalil Muntaqim, among others. These radical activists’ political consciousness informed their political activities with the belief that freedom was based on land and independence. The BLA as an insurgent expression of Black Power should expand the conversation to rethink what self-defense looks like in the colonial context of Black Power. With the legitimate ties to the Republic of New Afrika and the land question, the BLA serves an insurgent purpose for Black liberation. Often grouped amongst terrorist organizations, by the late 1970s some of the most ideologically advanced Black revolutionaries used armed struggle as an expression of human dignity. The BLA can be conceptualized in the context of Frantz Fanon or Amilcar Cabral, waging a struggle for national independence for the right to sovereign lands for liberated people. Armed struggle was the route to national independence on many occasions when colonialist repression voided all other legal means to shift power. Thus, beyond the terrorist label, the BLA, within the scholarship of the BPP should be seen as an expression of Black Power through insurgency to develop the Republic of New Afrika and liberate African-American with armed struggle.

Conclusion

Black Radicalism in the 1960s became synonymous with anti-imperialism which resulted in the growth of emerging activists who joined the Black Radical Tradition based on their worldly experiences with segregation in the U.S. North and the U.S. South. Joining radical organization like the Revolutionary Action Movement, Republic of New Afrika, or the Black Liberation Army, meant that the analysis some activists used to conceptualize themselves in the United States had evolved. Thus, in order to be anti-imperialist, activists had to reevaluate the domestic and international role of the United States as a component of their anti-imperialist praxis.

The Black Freedom Struggle, especially following the arrival of Black Power, evolved exponentially. *Black Insurgency* developed the conversation to rethink the basic conceptualization of Black Power being tied to strictly political power. Social transformation for these organization comes through the deconstructing of U.S. imperialism through the erecting of a Black nation-state. Moreover, social transformation is insurgent in nature for these revolutionary Black nationalist organizations, the use of arms shifts conversation to rethink what self-defense looks like in the colonial context of Black Power. Waging a counter-war for national independence through armed struggle is reinterpretation of Black Power in its most advanced stage.

The land question and the Republic of New Afrika encompasses so much to the conversation of Black Power. The political assertion to pursue and demand land to establish a

Black nation-state with the use of arms to exert a political consequence on the colonial apparatus if power is not surrendered from over the African-American community is a unique conversation rarely engaged in Black Power scholarship. Also, the re-identification process, which removes the “African-American” label from African-descended people and replaces it with the New Afrikan identity

In the radical tradition of resistance, the Black ontological experience in the United States invoked a uniquely resistant response in the 1960s. As an example in this thesis, the Black Liberation Army as part of the New Afrikan Independence Movement simultaneously captured the words of Malcolm X and Chairman Mao Tse-Tung as they advanced ideologically and enacted a people’s war for national liberation. The politico-military organization was immersed with politically sophisticated Black revolutionaries akin to the Mau-Mau of Kenya. This armed response to an inward facing colonialism facilitated political growth towards the establishment of a new nation for African-Americans to practice self-governance and self-determination. The pursuit of a Black nation-state became the central radical response for many formations in the late 1960s; political activities continued throughout the 1980s to bring this liberated zone to fruition.

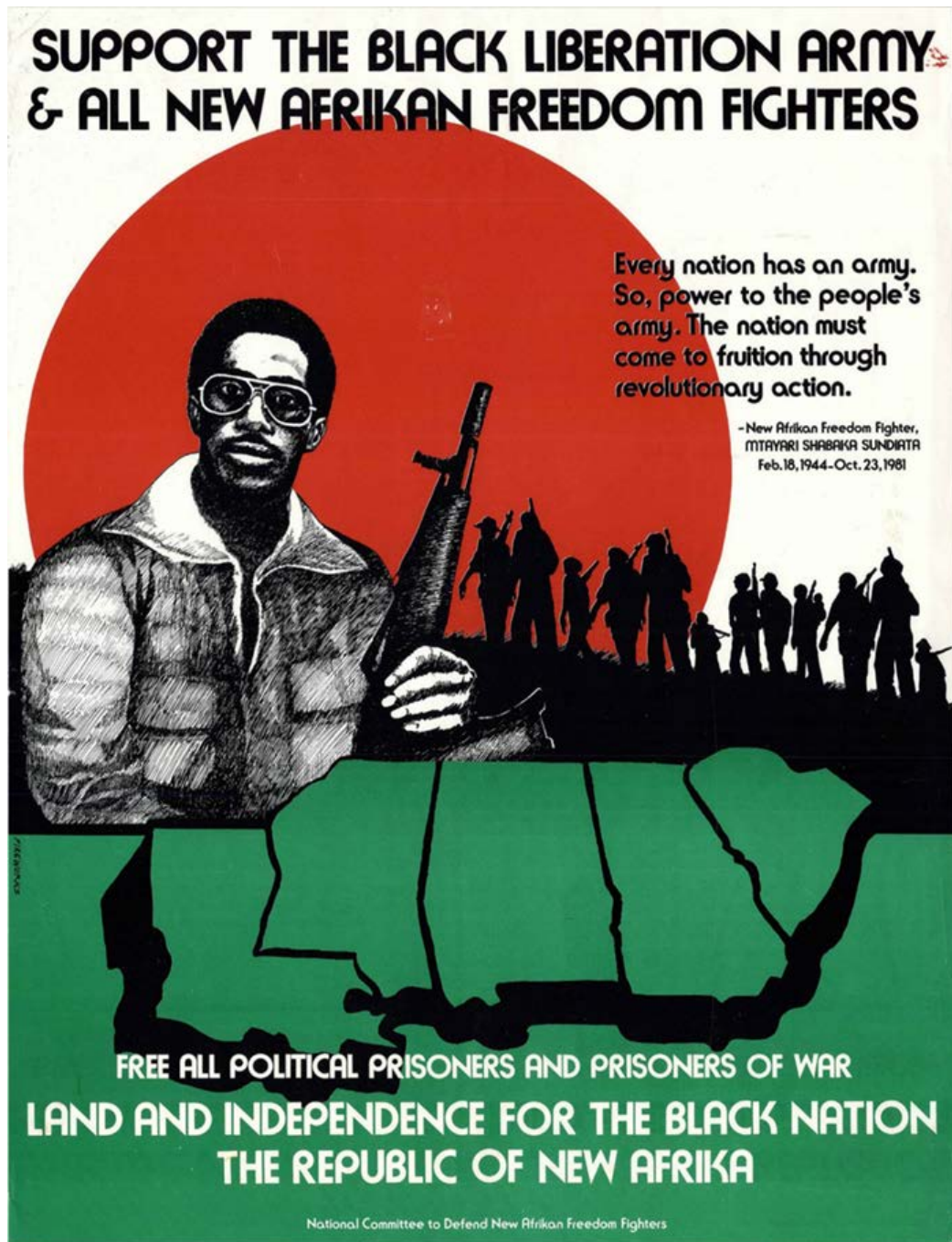


Figure 5.1 The Committee to Honor New Afrikan Freedom Fighters, “Support the Black Liberation Army & All New Afrikan Freedom Fighters,” *The Breakthrough*, (1982). This image comes from a New Afrikan periodical from the early 1980s. The image depicted connects land to armed insurgency, particularly through two organizations, the Republic of New Afrika and the Black Liberation Army. Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata is quoted as saying “Every nation has an army. So power to the people’s army. The nation must come to fruition through revolutionary action.” Mtayari was killed by NYPD while participating in political activities to “free the land.” Sekou Odinga recounted the death of Mtayari, his close comrade, as he accepted an award for his participation in the Black Liberation Movement at the 2021 International Tribunal. Odinga was a longtime New Afrikan Freedom Fighter as well in the BPP/RNA/BLA. This image of Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata illustrates the interconnectedness of struggle in the pursuit of Black self-determination within the New Afrikan Independence Movement.

As the domestic war waged on, internationally, the war in Vietnam became a pertinent example of U.S. imperialism; as the repression of revolutionary Black activists of an evolving generation, paired with the ever-decaying conditions of Black America suited the understanding of Black America being a domestic colony of the United States. Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Harold Cruse were able to convey this message rhetorically, physically, and theoretically. As Black Power grew as a political phenomenon, so began the grouping of African-Americans with the Third World for the purpose of waging a struggle for national independence. Land became an essential feature in the philosophy of revolutionary Black nationalism, which RAM espoused to be the parameters for which struggle must be waged, particularly as Black America was the vanguard of the worldwide Black revolution.

Each of these organization discussed were essential to theorizing about the weakening of the U.S. as an empire through an internal struggle against colonialism, imperialism, and racism. These organizations developed internationalist perspectives to widen their solidarity for gaining support of a legitimate struggle for land as part of the Black Freedom Struggle. It was quickly realized by African-Americans involved in Black Freedom Struggle they soon would have to display solidarity with the rest of the Third World, and play their part in also weakening the imperialist power that crippled other colonized people around the world. Armed struggle was a tactical response to the growing domestic warfare in the United State. Armed struggle was also a mechanism that through solidarity with the Third World saw successful revolutions transpire. Thus, the establishment of the Black Guard, Black Legion, and the Black Liberation Army were created to protect political outcomes, advance the liberation struggle to a higher level of militancy, and engage in a protracted war against the state. Politico-military formations

possessed responsibility in the Black Freedom Struggle that was multi-layered, *Black Insurgency* makes this a focal point of the broader insurgency argument.

The struggle to liberate African-Americans through Black Power politics is best expressed through the ideological clarity produced by these organizations. Without the leadership of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams the conceptualization of self-defense would not have evolved to armed insurgency to achieve national independence. The Revolutionary Action Movement through the basic tenets of revolutionary Black nationalism provided an essential adjustment during the height of the Civil Right Movement. As legislation was not offering a substantial material change for African-Americans, urban rebellion as an insurgent method became a tactic to weaken the infrastructure of the United States to leverage concessions.

As repression intensified, the birth of the Republic of New Afrika has been foundational to this paper's argument of land being essential, nationalist and intellectual Muhammad Ahmad would soon shift his trajectory from anarchism to pursuit of nationhood. The overlap between members of the Black Panther Party and the Republic of New Afrika is quintessential to the growth of ideology and the view of land as an aspect of self-determination. As the struggle continued, the Black Liberation Army exercised legitimate armed resistance to the internal colonial war occurring against the Black Freedom Struggle. This resistance is part of the genealogy of Black radicalism, that situates internationalism, armed struggle, and land at the core a protracted war of liberation.

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